This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

Minnie Herman

Thurlow Weed Brown

AL981.6.11

HARVARD COLLEGE
LIBRARY

THE BEQUEST OF

EVERT JANSEN WENDELL
(CLASS OF 1882)

OF NEW YORK

1918

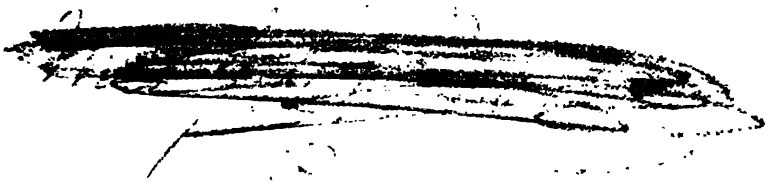
Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google



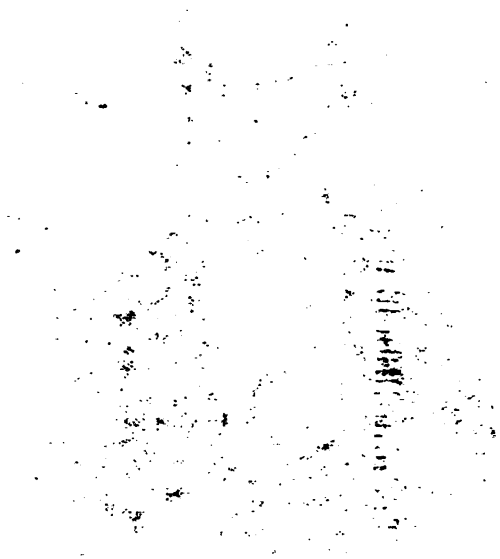
Digitized by Google

Engraved by J C Buttre from a Daguerreotype

Yours for the War,

Thurlow W. Brown

Digitized by Google



Digitized by Google

FIFTH THOUSAND.

MINNIE HERMON:

OR,

THE NIGHT AND ITS MORNING.

A Tale for the Times.

BY

THURLOW W. BROWN,

AUTHOR OF "TEMPERANCE TALES AND HEARTH-STONE REVERIES."

AUBURN AND BUFFALO:
MILLER, ORTON & MULLIGAN.
1854.

Digitized by Google

AL 981.6.11

HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY
FROM
THE BEQUEST OF
EVERT JANSEN WENDELL
1918

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year one thousand eight hundred and fifty-three, by

DERBY AND MILLER,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the Northern District of New-York.

Stereotyped by
DERBY AND MILLER,
AUBURN.

Digitized by Google

TO

Our Father,

WHOSE PRECEPT AND EXAMPLE HAVE EVER GUIDED US
TO VIRTUE, TEMPERANCE AND HONOR,

This Volume

IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

IN HIS GREEN OLD AGE, MAY HE WITNESS THE PASSING AWAY
OF THAT MALIGN SHADOW WHICH RESTED SO
GLOOMILY UPON HIS CHILDHOOD.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

PREFACE.

Our Preface, reader, shall have the merit of brevity, and shall detain you but a moment.

"Minnie Hermon" was commenced two years ago in the *American Temperance Magazine*, but abandoned in consequence of more pressing duties. Detached chapters, however, have appeared in the *Chief* from time to time. The work is now before you, though from ill health and the pressure of daily toil, it has been completed under unfavorable circumstances; the most of it having been written in the night-time, after the usual daily toil had been ended, and at almost as many points as there are chapters.

You will bear in mind that every chapter in the book is *drawn from life*, with the necessary change of names and dates — the only difficulty having been in selecting from the mass of materials collected during an active participation in the Temperance Reform. Those living who have a vivid remembrance of the scenes herein detailed, will appreciate our object in sketching them.

The history of the "Watt Family" was written with a throbbing nib, and its truth sealed with the endorsement of a scalding tear.

If our record shall arouse a single heart to a more inveterate hatred against the Great Wrong, our object will have been accomplished.

— Pass on.

Auburn, January, 1854.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

PAGE.

A Marked Character introduced to the Reader, ... 11

CHAPTER II.

The Manuscript, ... 18

CHAPTER III.

Minnie Hermon, ... 28

CHAPTER IV.

A New Project, ... 34

CHAPTER V.

The Spell broken — Evil Counsels prevail, ... 44

CHAPTER VI.

The "Home" — A Wrong regulated, ... 50

CHAPTER VII.

Death in the Attic, ... 64

CHAPTER VIII.

A Wedding at the Cottage — Only one Glass," 70

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IX.

PAGE.
First Fruits, ... 84

CHAPTER X.

The Author talks — A Lapse of ten Years in our History — The Change, ... 93

CHAPTER XI.

A Winter Scene, ... 107

CHAPTER XII.

Three Meetings, and What was Said — A Prayer Answered, . 117

CHAPTER XIII.

Mabel Dunham, ... 131

CHAPTER XIV.

Going from Home, ... 139

CHAPTER XV.

Unmoored from the Hearth, ... 147

CHAPTER XVI.

The Stranger in the Tarpaulin, ... 152

CHAPTER XVII.

The Trial, ... 158

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Gallows Cheated of a Prey — The People of a Sight, 175

CHAPTER XIX.

The Watt Family, ... 184

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XX.

PAGE.
"MORAL SUASION," 191

CHAPTER XXI.

A BEACON ON THE WASTE 202

CHAPTER XXII.

BREAKING GROUND AGAIN, ... 214

CHAPTER XXIII.

LIGHT IN A DARK PLACE, ... 235

CHAPTER XXIV.

WASHINGTONIANISM — THE OLD MAN'S STORY, ... 249

CHAPTER XXV.

HIGH LIFE, ... 271

CHAPTER XXVI.

CLEAN TICKETS — STICKING TO PARTY, ... 285

CHAPTER XXVII.

POISON IN THE CUP — SIGNATURE OF THE DEAD — A GUEST NOT INVITED, ... 317

CHAPTER XXVIII.

TWO MORNING CALLS — A LIVE MAN FOR A DEAD ONE, ... 334

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE WICKED PLOT — THE WICKED TRIUMPH, ... 352

CHAPTER XXX.

ANOTHER VICTIM IN THE NET — THE WICKED STILL TRIUMPH, . . 360

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXXI.

PAGE.

THE SECRET OUT — A FATAL WAGER, ... 372

CHAPTER XXXII.

A GROUPING OF SCENES, ... 387

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A STAR IN THE EAST — THE PLAGUE STAYED, ... 408

CHAPTER XXXIV.

TWO RESCUES, ... 427

CHAPTER XXXV.

IN WHICH THE READER WILL SEE SOME ACQUAINTANCES, AND THE END OF THE WORK, ... 458

Digitized by Google

MINNIE HERMON.

CHAPTER I.

A MARKED CHARACTER INTRODUCED TO THE READER.

On one of the coolest days of the autumn of 1850, by invitation, we visited, for the purpose of lecturing, one of the pleasantest villages in southern New-York.

The sun was far down in an unclouded sky, its beams mellowing in the blue haze which curtained the distant hills, and lingering like a smile from bliss upon the variegated woodlands.

Without seeking the friend who had invited us to enjoy his hospitality, we passed through the village, and turned from the highway into the fields, and upward to where a picturesque eminence promised a more attractive view of the autumn scene. The paths and the hollows were filled with the rustling leaves, the faded garniture of summer—and yet a more beautiful carpeting than art ever wove. From beneath a leaning maple, we turned to gaze long upon the landscape stretched beneath us. The woods upon the hills were draped in that gorgeous beauty

Digitized by Google

of the American autumn, a sea of rustling waves crested with golden and crimson foam, flecked here and there with the dark hue of the evergreens. The symmetrical forms of the maple and the walnut dotted the farm lands of the husbandman with pyramids of russet and flame-like canvass.

The Susquehanna wound through the valley and away to the south, glowing and shimmering in the sunbeams. We turned away from that which had yielded us so much pleasure, and still further above us saw a stranger, evidently enjoying the same prospect. His tall form stood out in striking relief from its background of distant sky, his attitude and mien graceful and imposing, as with head bared and hat in hand, he stood with folded arms, looking down upon the valley. As we stepped out from under the low-hanging branches, the rustling leaves attracted his attention. He returned our salutation with a manner so easy and dignified, that we at once recognized one of more than ordinary mind and polish. The true gentleman never forgets his position under any circumstances, much less in recognizing and returning the courtesies of a stranger.

Passing the village grave-yard, where the white slabs gleamed in the setting sun, we noticed seven highly finished ones standing closely together, and the same name chiseled upon all. The grass towered rankly upon the mounds, and the mould had long gathered at the base of the marble. The mounds were of the same length, thickly strown with the

Digitized by Google

leaves of the willow which dropped its boughs until they nearly swept the ground. As we emerged from the lane leading to the burial grounds, we again encountered the tall stranger of the hillside, leaning with a sad and thoughtful countenance over the fence near where we had stood by the seven graves.

The afternoon following, while standing upon the church steps with a friend, awaiting the gathering of the people, a note was slipped into our hand by a friend. It read thus:

"We are not used to harsh language here yet; — be guarded. Hon. Mr. Fenton will hear you. He is a citizen of talent and influence, and we wish to have him in our Division; but he is a drinking man, owns the tavern, and is extremely sensitive. Touch him gently. A FRIEND."

And so the *Hon.* Mr. Fenton, and a rumseller, would hear us. And must we hesitate in laying bare the iniquities of the traffic, because a gentleman of wealth, talent and standing was engaged in it? Thrusting the note into our pocket, we determined to take our own course — appeal kindly to men, but boldly and truthfully speak of the wrong.

A sea of heads was before us, curiosity drawing many to attend the long talked of demonstration. Conspicuous in the centre of the audience, his keen grey eye scanning the speaker with a stern and steady gaze, sat our tall acquaintance. "That," whispered

Digitized by Google

a clergyman at our side, "is the *Hon.* Mr. Fenton. If you are severe, he will answer you." We were satisfied from whence the note of advice.

Carelessly we commenced our remarks upon the prevalence and universal spread of intemperance. Quick answering tears, from a sad looking woman on the first seat, responded to the truth of the remarks made, and filled our own heart with tears. Warming as the interest increased, we continued: "In the mild sunlight of this blessed day, we look over your heads and out through the raised windows, where your kindred are at rest upon the kind bosom of our common mother. We know not the history of this community, but the destroyer has been among you. Undisturbed by our voice, the sleepers are resting on where the rank grass weaves its mat over their graves. Wherever the living carry their dead the cold arms of earth have been rudely open to wrap the victims of the scourge. Innocence, manhood and old age; the strong, the beautiful, the loved, and the true, have alike been consigned to premature graves. How cruel the blows which crushed from their hearts, life and its throbbing hopes! The kind marble heralds not their sad histories; but garnered in kindred hearts, are the memories of wrongs which ever ask a tribute of bitter tears, as the living stand by their graves. Have no circles been broken in this community? Have no loved ones been torn away from hearts which dripped tear-drops of blood, to go down in darkness to their graves? And no bright

Digitized by Google

resurrection morn to burst upon their long night of sleep? Who of you have friends in that old yard, whom you feel were wrenched away from heart and home by torturing inches, and worse than murdered? Is there a parent — an old mother — a broken-hearted wife — a sister of never swerving love — a child who has no parent but God — who does not go in there to weep over a grave where Hope never smiles and Faith never whispers "All is well?" Make our heart a store-house of the dark records of your history, and from this desk we will tread the grass-grown alleys, and here and there lay our hands upon cold and silent witnesses, proclaiming in the sad eloquence of enduring marble, the triumphs of the common scourge. Here is one, and there another! But for rum, they might have sat at your hearths this day. And who slew them? Is there no hand here among you red with a brother's blood? Look! and if so, turn away to a better life, and yield no more incense to the shrine of blood!"

The "Hon. Mr. Fenton" sat with his eye upon us as we proceeded, his chin resting upon his palm as he leaned upon the pew before him. A lone tear slowly gathered on the lid, and coursing down his cheek, dropped upon the open hand. As our introduction ended, he involuntarily raised his head and looked upon his hand, as though blood had gathered there in judgment against him, then bowing himself upon his hands, he remained until the meeting was dismissed.

As we passed down the desk, Mr. Fenton came boldly forward and stood at the door. The audience

Digitized by Google

were instantly hushed, expecting a war of words between him and the stranger. Reaching out, he clasped our extended hand in both of his, and stood, with swimming eyes, silently before us. We knew there would be no strife between us, for a better manhood gave utterance in the eye, and his grasp was almost convulsive in its energy.

"You are an honest man!" passionately exclaimed Mr. Fenton. "You have uttered the truth — solemn, fearful truth. *My* hands are red with more than a brother's blood. God forgive me! Let *me* tell you where they sleep, — those *I* have loved and lost!"

Mr. Fenton took our arm within his own, and together we passed into the yard just back of the church. He passed by the seven graves, and silently looked down upon them, while his broad chest heaved with strong emotion.

"*There*," said he, with wild energy, — there they are — all — *all!* There are my father and mother; the one died a drunkard and the other broken-hearted. In the next four graves are my — my boys. Brave, noble boys they were, too, as ever parent loved. In their strong manhood, they too, died *drunkards!* And here — merciful God! at my feet, is my injured, my murdered wife!" and kneeling like a child, and throwing his strong arms over the grave, he wept as a child would weep. "O! if God can forgive, may the last of a once happy band be gathered with thee at last; and the hand which wrought thy ruin be washed with pardon of its cruel crime. O, what a

Digitized by Google

fearful infatuation has rested upon me," he continued, as he raised himself from his kneeling posture. "I see it all now. Here by the graves of my kindred — my *all*, before you, sir, and these people, my injured wife in Heaven, and God, I solemnly swear that this hand *never shall again extend the ruinous cup to my fellow man.* My life shall be spent, so far as it is possible, in undoing the wrong I have committed."

In the clear air of that bright autumn afternoon, a shout, free and full with gladness, went up from the people in testimony of the high resolve. Bonfires were kindled in the evening, and joy beamed upon each countenance, lit up by the glare with greater intensity, as the blue flame of the burning liquors burst up and wreathed and hissed with the red ones of the burning timbers.

"*And so may my soul burn in hell*, if I ever harbor the cursed poison again!" Startled by the fierce energy of the speaker, we turned, to find Mr. Fenton looking upon the scene with a pale and compressed lip.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER II.

THE MANUSCRIPT.

Our host was early astir, every move characterized by a new and more hopeful life. Before we had arisen, all the machinery of drinking had been removed from the bar, and citizens were already gathered on the piazza, in earnest conversation upon the events of the previous day.

Mr. Fenton persisted in accompanying us across the river, talking sadly of the past and hopefully of the future. "At parting, he laid a heavy roll of papers in our hands, with a rapid history of their contents and of the manner in which they came into his possession. A friend of his, in early life, became intemperate, through the plotting of a villain; and in one of his fits of madness, turned his family from the door, and under charge of murder, was confined in prison, awaiting his trial. He was tried and condemned, but escaped before the day of execution. This manuscript, the labor of long days of imprisonment, was handed me under seal, while in the place, with the simple injunction that, should the writer never be heard of again, his friend should make such use of it as he saw fit. You," said Mr. Fenton, "know much of the history of intemperance and its

Digitized by Google

terrible ruin; but yet, the within may furnish you with something equally as interesting as that you have already learned. You will find the impress of no ordinary mind, and its publication, in whole or in part, may interest others as well as yourself."

The writing was more in the style of a private diary than otherwise. We shall give, in the course of our history, the substance of the matter, occasionally transcribing whole chapters as we find them written.

"OLD MEMORIES.

"The ocean of life may present a calm, unbroken surface to the eye — the very picture of repose; while beneath the dark and turbid currents are surging to and fro, black and angry, as they toss and leap against one another.

"The sky may smile without a cloud, as its blue depths are bathed in a flood of sunshine; and yet the lightning be heating its red bolts, and the storm troops marshaling for the onset.

"The human countenance may be as calm as that ocean, while bitter waters are welling up in the heart, as bright with sunshine as that sky unclouded, and yet the fierce tempest be sweeping across the soul, or the echoes of Sorrow's wail lingering amid the ruins of hopes which have been destroyed. The wildest imagery of fiction is more than surpassed by the realities of the "fitful fever" which we treat so lightly, and yet so madly cling to at its ending.

Digitized by Google

"While carelessly touching my guitar, the fingers unconsciously swept the strings to the measure of an old and sacred air, holy with the inseparable associations of scenes that never die! That touch was like the gush of long pent-up waters, and the flood of other days is again rushing through the soul, a mingled tide of sweet and bitter currents, now bathed with sunlight, and again dark with gloom.

"I drop the guitar and gaze long and dreamily into the fire, watching the vision of years as they troop by. I am young again! Ah! but 't was a dream, for the growl of my dog has dispelled the illusion, and I awake to find a tear on my lids, from which bright beams of silver are dancing to the waning embers in the grate. That tear has escaped from a sacred fount, sealed long and long ago.

"I touch the strings again. The thoughts flow calmer, and a strong impulse urges me to write. And why should I profane the sanctuary where early hopes and dreams are buried? Some will sneer at the revelation. And yet to see the words as they are traced upon the sheet, will be like looking on the faces of those long since at rest. There is no one here to see me if I weep; and these weather-beaten cheeks will welcome a shower from the heart's flood, which has been so unexpectedly stirred to its earlier depths.

"My manhood's hopes have gone out in darkest night, and infamy rests upon the once proud and untarnished name of Walter Brayton. An evil destiny has followed me and I am now incarcerated in a dungeon,

Digitized by Google

through the success of as foul a plot as human fiends ever conceived, to accomplish another's ruin. The world cares not for one whose career has ended so ignominiously, and it may never see my name vindicated from the stigma which now so unjustly rests upon it. The fickle populace has forgot its idol, and none but her whom I have most deeply injured stands by my side, while all else has been beaten down by the storm which has come upon me. She clings to me with a devotion which no destiny, however dark, can wrench away. A 'life history' may never be seen by other eyes than my own, if ever completed; but the long days will speed on lighter wing, even while I am tracing dark chapters in my cell. My crushed manhood's tears shall attest the truth of what I shall write, eloquent, it may be, in warning to whoever may trace these lines, to shun a course which has so trodden down as proud a spirit and aspiring ambition as ever throbbed in the bosom of early manhood.

"When eighteen years of age, my father removed from New Jersey, to a small and retired country settlement in one of the northern counties of New York. He had once been a merchant of business and standing — had mingled in the highest commercial circles, and I never could divine the reason of his locating in such a section of the country.

"There are faint remembrances of my early home. There is a vague, shadowy outline of a dark old dwelling, now lingering in my mind. All is dim,

Digitized by Google

misty, uncertain. I can hardly trace those outlines at this late day, for the foot-prints of years have gone over them. The impressions seem half dreams and half realities. The remembrance is gloomy, withal, and as I wander back, I shrink involuntarily at the spectral shadows which people and throng around that dream-land tenement.

"There was an old room, with high, sombre walls, and deep windows, over which hung rich, heavy curtains, nearly shutting out the light of day. Dark, massive chairs and sofas stood against the walls. And I remember that I dreaded the mirror which gave back the spectral outlines of the old nurse, and stepped back with a noiseless tread to the half-opened door. Once I looked out of those windows — only once. As I parted the faded curtains, the net-work of cobwebs brought down a cloud of the black and ugly looking creatures, and drove me away in a fright.

"But there was one room which I remember with more dread than I do the old parlor. It was across the hall, and I never saw the light of day break in upon its darkness but once. I was a child, and through the open door crept in and across to the window. I then clambered upon the sill, and with childish curiosity, pulled aside the curtains. Oh, what a flood of warm, pure sunshine gushed into the dark place; I remember it distinctly, and how red and beautiful the sun itself appeared just above the sea of roofs! I clapped my tiny hands and shouted

Digitized by Google

with glee, upon which the old nurse stole up behind me, and bore me away to the kitchen.

"I can remember but one more visit to that room. Everything wore a mysterious and saddened aspect. People trod lightly over the floor, and spoke in whispers. I watched all with sobered interest. At last an old lady friend took me in her arms and carried me in. A lamp burned dimly in the gloom, and the old clock ticked with painful distinctness in the hushed apartment.

"The nurse then raised me up, and held me where I could look upon the bed. As I looked down with a shrinking fear, I beheld a pale, calm face, the eyes closed as if in slumber, but oh, how still! A dread crept over me—the first startling knowledge of death. The nurse laid my hand upon the cheek—'twas cold—how cold! and as that strange chill crept back to my child-heart, I wept. I felt that something sad and sorrowful had taken place; that some one whom I loved had gone—some friend—and the young heart welled up its flood of unchecked grief. . . . A mother had gone to her rest!

"I remember but one place with pleasure in that old dwelling. It was where the sun shone brightly, and the vines crept thickly over the lattice-work. As I look back upon that obscure mirror of childhood, I see a happy throng, and merry sport they had. But the most hallowed dream of all, is that of a sad, kind face, which hung over me and touched mine so tenderly. I *know* that she had a low, silvery voice, for

Digitized by Google

it fell soothingly upon my childish fears and pains, and its tender echoes have never died away in my heart. I have heard no such tones since, save as they float up and linger on the tide of memory. —— The voice of a MOTHER speaks in those echoes!

"But how my pen has wandered under the influence of these old memories! Ah, well! I have not talked of these things before in long years, and my old heart yearns for sympathy.

"After our settlement in the new home, I became a tall, thoughtful boy. Care had written deep lines upon my father's face, and he said but little. Grief, too, had furrowed his features deeply, and a silvery white was fast mingling with his locks of jet black. But he was cold, stern, passionless, unchanging.

"I never saw my father manifest the least emotion but once. As I entered the parlor one morning, he was standing before a portrait that I had loved from my childhood. My step aroused him, and as he turned, I saw a tear upon either cheek. He passed out of the room, and I took his place before the picture, and stood looking dreamily until my own cheeks were wet with tears. —— I wept before the shadow of a substance which had forever passed away.

"Bitter knowledge came to me as I arrived at young manhood. My father had been a drunkard; my mother had been ill-treated by the husband of her youth, and had died broken-hearted. My love for her intensified as I learned the painful history, and I looked still more fondly upon that picture in the par-

Digitized by Google

lor, and thought that, had I been a man while she was living, I could have been her protector.

"It was by accident that I learned this sad history of wrong and neglect in him whom I had so loved as my father. In a drawer of old papers I found a letter. From a careless glance at the commencement, my attention became riveted, and I read with a throbbing heart until, through the blinding tears, I saw at the bottom my own mother's name. The letter had evidently been written at different dates, and was blotted with tears.

"'My Sister: — Crushed and broken beneath the ruins of all my early hopes, I turn to you to ask your forgiveness, and to pour into your too kind bosom the sorrows that overwhelm me. My heart aches — aches with its knowledge of blighted hopes, and of the fearful and bitter truths which have so thickly come upon me: my brain aches and turns almost to madness, as the history of a year sweeps over me. Oh, Martha! how I long to *die* — to lie down in the cold and quiet rest of the grave!

. . . . . .

"'Do you remember, Martha, the night before I was married, what you said to me as we stood under the old elm in the garden? — and how bitterly I spoke and repelled the warning you whispered to me in tears? You would forgive me, I know you would, were you to see me now. My poor heart bleeds at every pore; my cheek has faded and fallen away;

Digitized by Google

and you would not recognize in this ghastly wreck the wayward girl of our dear old home.

. . . . . .

"All is dark. Not a ray of hope on earth. I weep over my sleeping babes; but I must die. God protect them.

. . . "'That bright future, Martha, is all gloom — black, black as night. I have wept, and prayed, and besought. He mocks me. Great God! Martha, he mocks me in his drunken madness! He wildly laughs as I weep. To-day, I held our babe to him for a caress; he cruelly struck the innocent sleeper with his hand!

. . . . . .

"'I am dying, Martha! Do not weep; I long for rest. God will protect my babe. The consumption of sorrow and suffering is wasting my weary heart.

"'Our neighbors are kind, or we should suffer. Your ever kind heart will bleed when you know that the daughter of Colonel Wilder is in want. But I tell it to warn you. Never, as you hope for peace on earth, trust the man who drinks.

. . "'Frederick appears utterly indifferent. He spends his nights principally at the tavern, and is sullen when at home. Oh, it is hard to die thus. . . My cup overflows. Would to God that I had died when my mother died! Frederick came in this evening at the earnest appeal of our friends. How changed *he* is, as well as myself! He spoke bitterly to me, and demanded my *wedding jewels — he had*

Digitized by Google

gambled, and lost! He attempted to take the beautiful Bible our mother gave me, and as I lay my hand upon it in mute appeal, he — oh, Martha! — he struck me a heavy blow. . . . . Consciousness has returned, and the Bible is gone! . . . I shall die to-night. God protect the boy. . . . . .

"'ELLEN.'

"I mingled my own bitter tears with those that had long since become dry upon the blotted page, and went forth into the world with my boy-bosom throbbing with the hate of manhood against the curse which had killed my mother."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER III.

MINNIE HERMON.

"For a long time after removing to Oakvale, I found no kindred spirit with which to commune. My father was reserved, seldom smiled, or addressed a pleasant word to his only child.

"My young and impetuous nature must find employment in hunting. Day after day for weeks at a time, with fishing rod or gun, I ranged the dense forests which stretched away for miles in the immediate vicinity of Oakvale. I had found every overhanging crag, every waterfall and dark ravine, and threaded every stream. Thus engaged, I had not noticed the arrival of strangers in the village, and should have cared but little if I had.

"The winter somewhat restrained my sports, but, with the early spring, I was abroad again with dog and gun. Immediately back of Oakvale was a mountain stream, which plunged down a succession of falls into a deep, dark chasm, and rolled away through the valley. Recent rains had raised it to a swollen and angry tide, the cascades presenting one unbroken sheet of spray and foam. Nearly half way up the first fall was a wide, projecting mass of rock, overhanging the abyss so far that the spectator could obtain a complete view of the whole gorge above, un-

Digitized by Google

obstructed by the dense growth of overhanging spruce. The path to this landing place was through a wide fissure in the rocks, the rugged masses and dark evergreens rising upon either side until the sunbeams were shut entirely out. From this opening a circuitous and narrow path wound to the foot of the mountain.

"From early morn until late in the afternoon, I had followed a deer with ill success. Thrice had he taken to the river, across which I had followed him, until I was wet, weary and hungry. The dog did not close up with rigor, or the sport might have been soon ended. The deer at last crossed through the village and entered the river at the base of the mountain. Unleashing a fresh dog at home, I took the ferry and followed, sure of soon putting an end to the work. The dog drove the chase so closely that he entered the path to the table rock, and struggled with desperate vigor up the steep ascent. As he entered the rocky path I felt sure of him, for there was no egress but into the foaming basin beneath.

"The more rapid baying of the hound put new vigor into my weary steps, and I hurried forward. Entering the defile, I found the stag at bay, and the dog vainly attempting to reach him. Beyond and immediately upon the tall rock, over the chasm, was an apparition, so unexpected and startling, that my steps were fastened to the rock, and I looked in utter bewilderment, scarcely knowing whether it was real or imaginary. Slightly leaning forward, with hands

Digitized by Google

clasped and lips parted, and with a countenance of deathly paleness, stood the loveliest female figure I had ever beheld. She was beautiful in her terror — her hair hanging in heavy masses as it had fallen from its fastenings upon her exquisitely arched neck. A noble Newfoundland stood bristling and growling before her. At the instant the old dog came up, and with a fierce yell sprang at the stag, the latter turning upon his heels like lightning, and darting for the rock where the female stood.

"'Down—*down on your face!*' I screamed; but he lowered his antlers, and, like an arrow, shot over into the boiling gulf, carrying stranger, dogs, and all with him. A shriek came up distinctly above the roar of the waters, and I reached out to grasp the rock for support. As quickly I became strangely calm again, and rushed to the brink with a sickening sensation. My own dog and the deer were swimming in company down the swift current, but the Newfoundler, with the shoulders of his insensible mistress in his grasp, was swimming about as if at a loss where to strike out. Leaning over the rock, I swung my hat and shouted until the dog heard me, and with little hope of being understood, I urged him down the stream. The noble brute understood me, and struck out into the current. Reckless of life or limb, I turned and ran to the foot of the precipice, reaching the bend in the river just as the nearly exhausted dog and his burden swept around the point. He had exhausted himself in stemming the tide in the attempt

Digitized by Google

to reach the shore; and as he shot past, he turned upon me an eye whose strangely sad intelligence spoke mutely the language of despair. Leaping into the current, I struck out, and soon reached the dog and his prize, and after beating the current until nearly despairing, succeeded in reaching the shore.

"It was a long time before life returned to the insensible form of the beautiful stranger; but she was a prize worth saving! She was the only child of a middle-aged man, who had just moved into the village, with the remains of a broken fortune. Her history had been a sad one, as had mine; and our spirits, kindred in misfortunes, craved each other's companionship.

"A dark tempter had wrought the ruin of Mr. Hermon, and his wife had gone to her grave in the midst of the desolation. But like a star gleaming above the clouds of the storm, was the faith and devotion of the daughter.

"*Minnie Hermon* was just budding into womanhood, and one of the most beautiful creatures of female purity and loveliness it had ever been my fortune to become acquainted with. She was as gentle as a midsummer's breath, and as pure and lovely as that midsummer's flowers: and yet, she was a rock amid the wrecked fortunes of her father. Her spirit stood proudly up, and with that strange energy peculiar to woman under such circumstances, looked calmly upon the storm, while the spirit of the strong man bowed to the earth.

Digitized by Google

"Minnie possessed every virtue which sheds a lustre upon the character of woman. She was not wild or wayward; — a tinge of sadness mingled with the lovely calmness of her countenance; her very motion, and look, and tone, were calm, falling upon all around like mellow sunlight. All loved Minnie Hermon.

"I *loved* her with the intense, idolatrous devotion of youth. Our natures were similar; our histories, too, were much the same; and a feeling of common sympathy seemed to draw our hearts into closer communion the more we learned of each other's history. Each turned with sadness from the past, for we both had a drunken father, and both had lost a mother.

"We were happy. The old woods stretched down the mountain side to the outskirts of the village; streams leaped and danced to the valley's bed, and then babbled onward to the river. Many a wild nook was hidden among the mountains, and there we rambled and dreamed, with nature around us.

"Not a word had ever passed our lips of *love;* and yet each heart knew all. Even as we watched the gliding streams, or the sunlight as it faded out over the hills, hearts conversed while lips moved not; and the warp and woof of a holy tie were weaving into our destinies.

"Minnie was no ordinary woman. Her mind had suffered nothing from the education of so called fashionable life: its native — in some respects more than masculine — strength was unimpaired. The circumstances of her father's failure had brought out all the

Digitized by Google

energies of her character, by throwing her back upon her own resources. She had improved all her advantages, and still retained the original nobleness and purity of her nature.

"And thus we spent some of our brightest years, dreaming together as we watched the drifting of the summer clouds, which were mirrored in the bosom of the lake which slept among the hills.

"Dreams are like clouds!—a cloud was drifting over *our* sky, surcharged with a bitter storm."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IV.

A NEW PROJECT.

"The business of the little village was increasing, and it was talked of that the little community needed a tavern: its business interests required such an 'accommodation,' it was thought. And so the matter was gravely discussed; and as Mr. Hermon seemed to be best located for the accommodation of 'the public,' he was urged to open a tavern. Of course rum must be sold; for, at that day, a tavern could not have been kept without it. That fatal idea has filled a world with dead men's bones.

"I had not yet heard of the project on foot. On entering the dwelling of Hermon one evening, I found Minnie in tears. Her eyes were red and swollen with weeping, and long, convulsive sobs were struggling for utterance. I was startled, but soon learned the cause of her trouble, for she told me all.

"The remembrance of the past swept over her like the shadow of gloom, and she shrank from the darkened future. Her father had that evening informed her of the new project, and of his determination to carry it out.

"I saw it all at a glance. I not only saw the troubles which were thickening over the head of Minnie,

Digitized by Google

but felt their malign influence sweeping across my own sky. A presentiment of swift-coming evil darkened in the heart, as my mind dwelt with painful intensity upon the history of my own mother and her unhappy death.

"At the close of the last section, I spoke to the reader of a cloud which was fast drifting across the sky of Minnie Hermon and myself. I had no definite conception of what that cloud would be, yet a feeling of dread came over me. I felt its approach. Its shadow seemed to fall into my pathway, and I looked for the coming of some bitter trouble. I always believed in presentiments, and the darkest one of my life warned me of some approaching trial.

"At the close of a spring day, I wandered up the mountain to the accustomed retreat; but the golden sunbeams faded out one by one, and Minnie came not. That same foreboding of evil came over me again, until the music of the waterfall murmured with a tone of sadness, and the low breathings of the old forest were like sighs in the evening breeze.

"I returned to the village and sought the residence of Mr. Hermon. I found him in company with my father and several other of the more prominent citizens of the place, busily discussing some matter in the parlor.

"'It will be worth a hundred dollars a year to the place,' remarked our merchant, as I entered.

"'And besides, be a great accommodation to the traveling public,' continued Deacon Smith.

Digitized by Google

"'It will bring a great deal of business to the place,' lisped a young lawyer, who had just hung out his shingle in the village.

"'Not only that, but it will make business right here amongst us,' said the doctor, a man of much talent, and beloved by all with whom he associated.

"'We can then hold our general parades here,' remarked Colonel James, and his eyes twinkled at the idea of his appearance in epaulettes in his own community.

"'Farmers from the country will always find it a convenient stopping-place to stop when here to trade, or to get their milling done,' said a young farmer of wealth, who lived some three miles out of the village.

"'The thing will give us a reputation abroad,' continued my father, as the party all left to continue the discussion of this new plan at the store.

"What this new project might be, which met with such cordial approbation from the leading men in the village, I had not learned.

"As the company passed out, Minnie entered the room from an opposite direction. She met my usual greeting with a strange and embarrassing silence. I urged her to explain, when she only answered with a fresh burst of grief.

"She wept herself into calmness, and then revealed to me the cause of her sorrows.

"The subject of the discussion in the parlor was explained, and I at once saw the nature of the cloud which hung ominously in our sky. A faint, sickening

Digitized by Google

sensation crept to my heart while I listened to the footfalls of the tempter which was to transform our Eden into a realm of darkness. That tempter assumed no definite shape to my inexperienced mind. I saw nothing clearly, but yet I shuddered at Minnie's revelation. A low hiss murmured upon my ear, and a sound of demoniac laughter audibly started me from my chair. I involuntarily turned, but nothing but the pure moonlight beamed in at the window.

"Why is it that the approach of some evil is so startingly foreshadowed?

"A TAVERN was to be opened in the village. This was the new project, and its necessity was urged by nearly all the inhabitants, in such kind of reasoning as was heard at the house of Hermon. A public house was needed, said such people, and as Mr. Hermon was the best situated to open one, his house was hit upon for the tavern. Though I spoke words of cheer to Minnie, she could not smile, and there was a weight at my own heart, which gave the lie as they fell. She looked upon the project as the very fountain head of unutterable woe to her and hers. I remarked, against my own convictions, that all might be well, but she solemnly answered:

"'Walter, you do not know all that I know of these taverns. I have seen my father leave his home and spend his time and money there, in the dead of winter, and poverty and want close around our hearthside, until my own sunny childhood has been crushed, and the mother of my idolatry grew pale

Digitized by Google

and emaciated for the want of fuel and bread! Oh, God! it is horrible to think of. I could have coined my young blood to have warmed and fed—to have saved her. I saw her thin and staggering form felled to the hearth by—*my father's hand!* Do you see this?' and she pointed to a broad scar on the back of her head. 'The same hand and the same weapon laid me senseless as I raised my child-hands to save my mother. And yet, a kinder father or happier home child never knew, than I once had. My heart burns within me until I well-nigh go mad, as the deep-rooted hatred against the cause of all our misery is aroused anew at the mention of a *tavern*. I have starved, Walter—aye—*starved* for the want of bread. I have waded the cold winter drifts until my very heart was chilled to its centre, and then been laughed at by the crowd assembled. Pinched with cold and hunger, I have begged for a wasting mother. That mother died in a hovel, and was buried as a *pauper*, —the very fingers of death robbed of a wedding-ring wherewith to purchase rum! The tavern did it all. *May God's curse rest upon them!*'

"Minnie bowed her face in her hands, and wept long and bitterly. I thought of my own mother, and of the letter which so fearfully revealed her sad history, and mingled my own tears with hers.

"Late at night, I returned with a heavy heart to my father's house.

"The next morning, I asked my father what it was which he and his friends were so earnestly talking

Digitized by Google

about at Mr. Hermon's. There was a slight flush upon his cheek as he looked me in the eye, and abruptly answered,

"'A tavern, sir!'

"That 'sir,' stung me. The tone and the look were somewhat startling. I at once saw that it was a matter which he did not wish to talk with me about; but I became emboldened, and determined to discountenance the project, though all the magnates of the village should favor it. I spoke confusedly, yet with all the impetuous earnestness of youth. I felt that I was right. I dared to denounce taverns as a curse — as places where men were made to neglect and abuse their own families and disgrace themselves.

"I had unthinkingly touched a tender spot, and his black eye kindled and flashed as he bent his full gaze upon me. There was a paleness about his lips, and he breathed huskily through his clenched teeth, while a bitter and scornful smile gave his countenance a dark and forbidding outline. I knew he was deeply angered, yet feared him not. At any other time, I should have shrunk from such portents, but my young blood was up at his menacing appearance, and some mysterious influence unclosed a torrent of warm words from my lips. I followed up my blows, he glaring at me, and his broad bosom heaving under excitement.

"'*Boy!*' at last he fiercely hissed between his hard-set teeth as his rage found vent in words, '*Boy!* no more out of your head. I'll not be thus outraged by

Digitized by Google

your impudence. I can attend to yours. Go, sir, your presence can be dispensed with.'

"He literally stamped and chafed, but while he boiled with passion, I became perfectly cool. I confess that there was something of revenge in my coolness. The letter of my mother came up before me, and every word glowed like hot lava in my blood and burned upon my tongue's end. A pent-up tide of bitterness against my father gushed fiercely up, and I eagerly availed myself of the opportunity of revealing the knowledge I had so painfully acquired, of intemperance, and its fatal effects upon my mother. He had not dreamed of such knowledge on my part, and readily supposed that I knew more of his early course than I really did. My unguarded and hot words stung him like serpents, and he grew purple with rage. Walking menacingly up to where I stood, he raised his clenched hand, and with a fearful oath ordered me to be gone.

"'*Leave the room*, you young reptile,' he fiercely said, his hand still raised. The blow which fell years ago upon the dying mother, blistered upon my own cheek, and I fearlessly retorted while looking him full in the face,

"'*Strike!* the hand that basely crushed a broken hearted mother, would have little hesitation in striking the child.'

"My father's face grew livid as I deliberately pronounced the words, and instead of striking me, as I expected he would, he turned away like a drunken

Digitized by Google

man, and reseated himself in his chair. I left the room, regretting the harsh words I had spoken, and yet not altogether displeased with the effect they evidently produced upon him.

"Ever after, in our conversation, my father treated me with marked coolness and reserve. I was grieved at this, for I felt that from my heart I wished his own good in what I had said of a mother. Oh, if I could at that time have enjoyed the light of that world-wide flame which has since been kindled upon the temperance altar, I feel that I could have headed-off the new project.

"I freely and frankly told Minnie of the conversation which had passed between my father and myself.

"'We are doomed,' said she, in reply. 'I have warned father. I have reminded him of the promise — the sacred and solemn vow he made at the bedside of my dying mother, as she placed my childish hands in his—never to visit a tavern, or drink again. I told him of that mother's sufferings — of my own — of his fearful fall, and long and dark pilgrimage of degradation. I knelt to him and wet his hands with my tears as I wept in the fullness of my grief, and besought him by all that was dark in the past, comfortable in the present, and blissful in the future, to abandon the tavern project. But, Walter, I have no hope that he will, and I fear that my poor heart has hardly tasted the bitterness yet to come. I can already see the result of this—he is determined. The tear that for a moment gathered in his eye, as I spoke

Digitized by Google

of my sainted mother in heaven, was chased away by a flash of untamed passion, and he rudely bade me desist. Walter, the accursed work has *already commenced!* I learned that he had been then drinking, and I have since found a bottle hidden away in the closet! God pity me!'

"The truth flashed upon me;—my own father had been drinking at the time he exhibited such passion. I had not dreamed that it was rum instead of rage which caused him to reel as he turned away from me that morning. Our merchant kept liquors for *medicinal purposes*, and it was there where the damning fires of intemperance had been covertly kindled anew.

"I now felt myself older by years, than a few days. Age had crept into my young heart, and chased the smile from my countenance. I felt that I stood in the position of a protector to Minnie, for our whole community were enlisted for the new tavern. I felt the full baptism of manhood come upon me, and spoke boldly and frankly to her of love, and offered my hand in marriage. She laid her hand in mine, and with all the wealth of her deep and pure affection, returned mine. I urged her to an immediate union, and thus joined, to seek a retreat of our own, and together meet and turn aside the storm which was gathering around us. But she would not yet consent She said she was the only kin of her father, and could not consent to leave him alone and unwatched over in the troubles which were evidently coming upon him.

Digitized by Google

"'No, Walter, do not urge me. My love would lead me with you to the ends of the earth, and through any trial, but it seems to me that duty says, stay. I fear the worst; and if my father again falls into that fearful abyss, who will care for him if I do not? I know all you would say of his past negligence — nay, cruelty — but should I leave him while there is a single hope? It may be that I can save him. At any rate, if I cannot stay the cloud whose shadow already falls so darkly around us, I can cling to him when it bursts.'

"My youthful earnestness — my strong love of Minnie, grew impatient under such reasoning; but she was firm, and I loved her the more as I witnessed her deep and changeless devotion to the welfare of her father. It revealed still more of that angelic worth which had bound me so closely to the unassuming girl. Her heroic spirit gave me nerve, and I left her with a stronger reliance upon my own manhood, to meet whatever of ill might be in store for me."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER V.

THE SPELL BROKEN — EVIL COUNSELS PREVAIL.

"The people were infatuated with the new project. The remonstrances of Minnie and myself were but the feather's weight against the determination of the leading men of the community. I was looked upon as a meddlesome, impertinent young fellow, and she as a silly girl, whose feelings in the matter were influenced by me. The place demanded a *public house*, and the traveling public could not be accommodated without one. The tavern must be opened.

"Minnie avowed her determination once more to attempt to persuade her father to abandon the project of opening the tavern.

"Late one evening, Mr. Hermon sat by the parlor window, looking dreamily out upon the landscape which lay like a fairy realm under its wealth of moonbeams. Clear and calm, its smile stole silently in upon the carpet, and lingered like the messenger of innocence and purity upon the feverish cheek of the old man. With as noiseless a step, the lights and the shadows of other days lay minglod in the heart. The holy beauty and the associations of the hour were weaving a spell over the heavings of a troubled spirit, and the old man looked upward. Minnie well understood the wayward moods of her father, and knew, as

Digitized by Google

she had watched him from her seat upon the sofa, that his better nature was uppermost. With a gentle touch she swept the strings of her harp, her soul vibrating in every tone as she bowed over the instrument and wept. It had been her mother's harp, and the air was a favorite one of hers; its touching sweetness often banishing the frown from her father's brow, and melting his stern nature to tenderness.

"A tear glittered a moment on the cheek of Hermon, though brushed hastily away. But Minnie saw it, and, uniting her voice with the harp, she gave the words of the familiar hymn with all the sad fervor which her heart could feel. There was a tear in her tones, and they mingled like the low sweep of an angel's wing upon the stillness around. Hermon bowed his face ere the last words had died away. That hymn had opened the fountain of a thousand memories, and he could not but weep.

"With a beating heart, Minnie stole across the room and kneeled at her father's feet, weaving her arms around his knees and looking up in his face.

"'My own dear father! here, upon my knees, I need not tell you how much I love you. You know that no fortune can drive me from you. In the dark past I have clung more closely, as every other friend deserted. Father! look upon your only kin. As you love me — my sainted mother who smiles upon us to-night, — as you love yourself and Heaven, tell me now that you will have nothing to do with this tavern business. Will you not, my father?' And the

Digitized by Google

pleading girl caught his hand, and warmed it with her tears. Emotion stirred the strong man as he felt the pure gush upon his parched hand, and his heart was moved to say as she wished. The dark tempter was weakened in that bitter hour, and before the daughter's pleading; but yet the fearful bonds were upon him. The large drops stood out upon his forehead, and Hermon would have joyed to have escaped the toils which were weaving around him.

"'But I have promised, my child,' at last said her father, hesitatingly.

"'God help you to break that promise!' fervently replied Minnie. 'Happiness and Heaven are worth more than faith kept with wrong. I need not tell you all that I feel, father; but bitter wo is upon us if you keep the promise. As you promised my mother, so promise me this night, and we will still be happy. Will you not?'

"Minnie had arisen, and was imprinting a kiss on the old man's cheek, when footsteps were heard in the hall. My father and Deacon McGarr wished to speak with Mr. Hermon.

"The holy spell was broken, and the tempter was triumphant. When Minnie again saw her father, the usual frown was upon his features, and the fume of rum was upon his lip. No effort of hers could obtain a word from him in relation to the matter so painfully interesting to her. The next morning witnessed demonstrations which destroyed all her hopes of defeating the plan.

Digitized by Google

"The carpenters and masons were soon at work repairing, remodeling, and adding to, the dwelling of Mr. Hermon. A 'bar-room' was built on, and the upper story of the main building made into a 'ball-room.' Sheds and stables were erected on the beautiful yard below the dwelling; the bright and smooth greensward was cut up with hoofs and wheels, and covered with lumber, and stone, and sand. The wide-topped maples, now loaded with all the gorgeous wealth of their autumn garniture of gold and crimson, were considered in the way of 'improvements,' and were cut down. I watched the axe as stroke after stroke eat to the heart's core, and every blow hurt my own. I had passed some of the brightest hours of my existence beneath their wide branches, and when the rustling pyramids fell to the ground with a sigh, I felt that old friends had been severed from the earth. Their limbless trunks were rudely dragged away through the dirt, and the scattered leaves rudely trodden under foot.

"The dwelling of Mr. Hermon assumed an entire new aspect. The sound of the hammer, the saw, and the trowel, rang out through the quiet village, and kept alive the discussion about the tavern. Citizens assembled at evening to smoke and talk the matter over, each suggesting this and that improvement; good matrons stopped from their shopping or visiting to gaze over their specks at the change, while the 'ball-room' elicited the liveliest attention of the misses. The boys looked on with childish wonder

Digitized by Google

and gratification, and danced around the blazing pile of shavings which the carpenters had fired in the street at nightfall.

"The tavern was soon completed. The 'bar' was nicely arranged, and received the unanimous admiration of the villagers; for all, as they came in every evening to see how the thing 'got along,' had suggestions to make. A small piazza was built in front of the bar-room, and a broad bench placed the entire length, for the accommodation of customers. A new cedar pump had been put into the well, the top 'peaked' and painted white.

"The tavern awaited the furniture. The neighbors made a 'bee' and cleared away the rubbish in front, and drew in gravel around the shed and 'stoop.' The jug passed around freely during the afternoon, and at night a garrulous group gathered on the benches under the stoop, and for the hundredth time spoke of the great benefits which were to result from the tavern.

"A 'sign' was needed to announce the home for the traveler. After much consultation and suggestion of many names, that of 'Farmer's Home' was fixed upon. The sign was soon completed, with scrolls and gilded spear points, and swung up near the pump betwixt two tall posts. On the centre of the board, the painter had placed a beehive, as an emblem of industry and thrift, and beneath, the motto, 'peace and plenty.' The sign made a very neat appearance, and for a few days received the same attentions from the villagers as had the other improvements.

Digitized by Google

"One more arrangement, and the tavern would be ready to go into operation. There was a law *regulating* the sale of liquors and the keeping of public houses, allowing none but *moral men* to engage in so honorable and necessary an avocation. The tavern must be legally kept.

"At that day, the man who had dared to intimate that a tavern could be kept without liquor, would have been hooted at as a fool or madman. For how could travelers be entertained without 'accommodations?' The weary wayfarer would suffer alternately with heat and cold, if there was nothing to 'take.' A man or beast entertained at a public house where liquors were not sold!

"The supervisor and the justices of the peace were notified of the completion of Mr. Hermon's tavern, and applied to as a board of excise, for a license to keep it legally, or according to law. That grave body assembled the last of October, for it was important that a public house should be opened before the fall election."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VI.

THE "HOME" — A WRONG REGULATED.

THE reader will remember that we have been introducing our characters upon the stage while the arrangements were completing for the licensing of the 'Traveler's Home.' There are many more actors to be introduced before the drama all passes before the reader.

Late in the evening before the day of the meeting of the excise board, the villagers were gathered on the steps of the 'Home,' or setting on the benches, all deeply interested in the success of the new enterprise, and calculating on the benefits to the place by a large increase of business. Deacon McGarr, one of the justices, the supervisor, and several others of the magnates, were conversing in a low and earnest tone, of the probable rise in the value of the village lots and water privileges. Conspicuous above all was the village blacksmith.

We must give an outline of 'Jim Gaston,' as the huge Vulcan was familiarly called by his neighbors, as he will again appear in some of the future chapters.

Gaston's proportions were giant-like, he being six feet and eight inches in height, and of immense breadth of shoulders and strength of limb. His fist was as

Digitized by Google

large as his own sledge, and calloused with industrious toil. His huge head was buried in a dense undergrowth of black, bushy hair, features coarse and bronzed, but pleasant with the smile of undeviating good nature. In his broad bosom was as warm and true a heart as ever beat for family or friend, and all who knew him respected him as a genial-hearted, hard-working, honest man. With all his physical strength, Gaston had never been known to have an angry word in his life, with a customer or neighbor. On the contrary, he had on several occasions promptly, though good-naturedly, used his strength in defence of the weaker against the stronger. His own broad smile and happy disposition were infectious, and, winter or summer, early or late, his stentorian voice was heard, the accompaniment of his hammer and anvil.

Gaston, in his red flannel shirt, his open bosom and heavy neck and face begrimmed with smut from his day's toil at the forge, was cracking his good-humored jokes, as he sat on a pile of lumber in front of the stoop, and his deep hearty laugh rolling out from a wide throat. He was watching a merry group of children who were playing "hide and seek" in the thickening twilight, as happy as the happiest of them all. One pale and diminutive little fellow had nestled closely under the massive legs of the good-natured blacksmith, and a larger one behind his wide shoulders. While the boy on the "gool" was hunting his comrades under the shed, Gaston clasped the boy at

Digitized by Google

his back, and carelessly walked with him to the gool without suspicion, and dropped him upon it. No child laughed harder than he at the little ruse. Such are the outlines of "Jim Gaston," the blacksmith.

The evening had well advanced, and Deacon McGarr arose to go. At that moment Hermon came out of the bar-room with a glass and decanter in his hand, and passed to the end of the stoop where McGarr was lingering and talking with Gaston a moment, about some work to be done early in the morning.

"Deacon," said Hermon, "I suppose there is no doubt about my having a license to sell; and as I already have my liquors on hand, perhaps you would like to try a glass. I rather pride myself on my choice selection."

"Well, I don't know — what have you in the decanter?" and McGarr's eye glistened as he rolled a huge tobacco quid from his cheek into his hand and tossed it into the street, wiping his palm on his pants.

"Brandy, Deacon — fourth proof, and as smooth as oil. I can vouch for its quality," and Hermon poured a stiff horn into the tumbler, and handed it to McGarr.

Sure enough, the brandy went down like oil, and McGarr gave an approving ahem as he wiped his lips with the back of his hand; then planting his feet well apart and throwing out his capacious person with a pompous swing as he raised upon his toes, he pulled his large tin tobacco-box from his pocket, and

Digitized by Google

compressing a startling roll in his thumb and three fingers, twisted it into his mouth, and with his tongue thrust it to the accustomed receptacle in the cheek; then putting his thumbs in the arm-holes of his vest, and sticking out his little fingers in ludicrous efforts to show off his importance by discussing the qualities of the liquor he had drank at different times, spitting dignifiedly, working his little fingers, and swaying backwards and forwards alternately upon his toes and heels.

The decanter went round, and all drinked of the brandy, though the most of them made horrible faces as the raw liquid went down their throats. Among the latter was Gaston and the oldest son of McGarr. As the unwieldy blacksmith strangled and gasped for water and the tears stood in his eyes, the older part of the company enjoyed a hearty laugh. The matter was more serious with young McGarr, and the children who remained were merry at his tears and wry faces.

"It is nothing to laugh at," said old McGarr, evidently a little piqued, as he stroked his chin with his hand; "Harry is but a mere boy, and has not the experience of older people."

The company ceased laughing, and young McGarr took courage and looked up, with a boldness which gave promise of speedy manhood in the matters spoken of. His ambition was aroused to arrive at that point where he could swallow the dram as well as older men.

— A fatal ambition.

Digitized by Google

The villagers had all departed to their homes, and the long, wide street was hushed and still. Not a light was to be seen, or a footfall heard. Thick, murky clouds had gathered around the horizon, and the increasing night wind sighed dismally through the branches of the maple which had been left standing near the shed of the "Traveler's Home."

From the window of the sitting-room there now came the hum of voices, low, half whispering and sad, like the falling of tear-drops in the stillness of the night. It was Minnie Hermon and Walter Brayton, in sad communion upon the matter so fearfully interesting to them.

"Is there no way, Walter, by which this scheme can be defeated? I am as certain that ruin will come of it, as that the morning will dawn. Oh, were I a man!"

"What would you, what could you do, Minnie, to avert the result? The house is all arranged, the liquors are here, and to-morrow the board meets to give your father a license. Tell me."

Walter spoke earnestly and sadly, for her words had wounded him. Minnie had lost her resolute tone, and hung her head as she thought she had said too much.

"Pardon me, Walter, for I spoke from the strength of feeling and not soberly. I don't know that anything can be done. I have plead, but it all does no good. I have said all that I dare to; but, Walter, father is changed of late — he frowns and curses as he did when mother was living."

Digitized by Google

"Well, Minnie," said Brayton, with assumed confidence, "let us hope for the best. I have made up my mind to attend the meetings of the board to-morrow, and protest against the matter."

"It will do no good, Walter, they will all be against you."

"No matter; your father—they all will be offended, but they shall hear me," and Walter Brayton, firm in the strength of an honest purpose, raised himself to his full height, as if eager to grapple with some imaginary enemy.

With the sky overcast and the darkness around them, Minnie and Walter whispered kindly words to each other and parted. She listened to his retreating footsteps and to the sighing wind, and closed the door with darkening thoughts.

It had rained during the night, enough to prevent the farmers from attending their usual avocations on the following day. This, with the interest which the new tavern created, attracted a large number of people to the village, and when the hour came for the assembling of the board, the "Home" was thronged. The members were proud of their positions, and of appearing before their townsmen on an occasion of so much importance, and so, to make the matter as public as possible, they adjourned from the small sitting-room to the new and capacious ball chamber. Even this room was soon filled, and the benches by the walls were soon crowded, and a large number standing in the open space. No one could correctly

Digitized by Google

determine what particular thing had called the large assembly together, but an unusual official proceeding was to take place, and the interest was intense. They were to see a tavern licensed!

There was a busy hum among the people, and all were anxiously awaiting the commencement of the proceedings.

At last Deacon McGarr took it upon himself to walk around behind the table, and after looking wisely through his spectacles upon the assembly, proceeded to call the board to order; whereupon the other members modestly took their places at the table. The supervisor was a white-haired old gentleman — an honest and well-meaning old farmer, but little used to public business. The remaining members were of the average material selected in country towns for such positions.

McGarr was still standing, one hand in his pantaloons pocket and the other resting upon the back of the statute, which had occupied a conspicuous place before him, he still looking solemnly over his spectacles, as if to awe into perfect silence before he proceeded farther. Just at this juncture there was a bustle at the door, and the tall form of Colonel Weston appeared conspicuous. McGarr assumed a bland smile and beckoned the Colonel towards him, and while the wealthy young farmer was elbowing his way through the crowd, the Deacon had officially driven some of the smaller fry from their seats, and secured a wide berth for him near the table. Close

Digitized by Google

in the wake of Weston swayed the huge form of the blacksmith, his face covered with smut and smiles. The Deacon did not esteem Gaston as important a personage, and left him standing in the crowd, his shoulders and open flannel shirt bosom conspicuous above the heads of them all.

After Weston had taken his seat, McGarr looked as sternly and solemnly as ever over his spectacles, and then elevating his face and looking through them, his hands locked under the skirts of his coat behind him, after spitting with due precision, he broke the impressive silence.

"I suppose, gentlemen, you are all aware of the object which has convened us here."

The Deacon dropped his head impressively and looked over his spectacles, after adjusting them more carefully upon his nose and again putting his hands together under his coat tails. Finding that the silence was duly respected, he spit again, and continued.

"I say, gentlemen, we are met here as a board of *exercise*, for the purpose of granting a license to Mr. Hermon, to keep a tavern. I needn't 'lucidate on the advantages of a tavern in a place like this. No, gentlemen, — it is plain to every one, that a house for the accommodation of the public, is highly needed among us. I *persume* there is not a single *descending* voice against a tavern — not one."

Mr. McGarr, at the conclusion of the last sentence, given in an emphatic tone, jerked his thick body vio-

Digitized by Google

iently forward to make it still more emphatic, his specs falling from his nose upon the table. A titter ran round the outside of the room, among the younger portion of the audience, and the Deacon colored deeply at such an interruption of his speech. But he wiped his specs, and as he again put them on, he dropped his brow, rolled his quid to the other side of his mouth, and again looked silently around over his glasses.

"Gentlemen and la—— gentlemen. We need a tavern. Our feller citizen, Mr. Hermon, has prepared to keep one, and wants a license. He is a man of excellent moral character, and we are obliged as a board of *exercise*, to give him one. The law is plain on this *pint*." As he concluded, he took his specs off with one hand, and with the other dropped the "statoo" emphatically upon the table. With a self-satisfied air, he pulled away his coat skirts and sat down, crossing his legs and resting his thumbs in his vest. As he looked around to see what effect his speech had made upon the spectators, he slowly stroked his chin, and drummed on the floor with his foot.

No one said a word, and McGarr, with a condescending air, finally suggested that perhaps others might wish to make a few remarks upon the subject before them. Whereupon the supervisor raised about half way up, with his hand resting upon the post of his chair, and stammered out the idea that there ought to be a tavern in the place, and then sat down,

Digitized by Google

drawing a long breath. During this time, Mr. Hermon was standing in front of the table, with his hat in his hand, his chin resting upon the crown. Old Mr. Brayton was resting upon the corner of the table.

"Gentlemen, as you have given opportunity, I wish to make a few remarks."

All turned as these words, in low and tremulous but pleasant and distinct tones, arrested their attention. Deacon McGarr so far forgot his dignity as to raise himself partially from his chair, and look towards that part of the room from whence the voice proceeded; then putting his hand behind his ear, in a listening attitude, he requested the gentleman to speak louder. Thus assured, the speaker stood upon the bench where all could see him. It was Walter Brayton. His countenance was flushed, and he hesitated with embarrassment, but he was committed and all eyes were turned upon him.

"I see, my friends, that I shall be alone in what I have to say, but before God I believe I am in the right, and I must speak honestly. Alone though I may be, I most earnestly and solemnly protest against this whole affair. I know that I shall offend when I say it, but I think I can see that your tavern, instead of being a benefit, will be a deep and lasting injury. It ought never to be."

Walter spoke rapidly, but with an honest energy which riveted attention. His were novel thoughts at that day, and his a bold and embarrassing position.

Digitized by Google

But there was the ring of the true metal in his manly tones, and had he been spared in his strength until a later day, his moral heroism would have made him a leader whose words would have been a trumpet's blast.

Deacon McGarr looked more sternly than ever over his glasses, and chewed his quid rapidly, casting inquiring looks from the father to the son. The elder Brayton sat with a frown and compressed lip, and Hermon looked angrily towards McGarr.

"Does the young man know what he is talking about?" asked McGarr, with attempted sternness, eyeing Walter over his glasses.

"Yes, sir," replied the latter, respectfully but firmly; "I am talking of a tavern which you propose this day to empower to sell intoxicating liquors to your neighbors. I know that I am talking to older men, but I believe that the result of your action will bring desolation and sorrow to your homes and families in the future. This is a peaceful, happy community now, but you commence the retail of spirituous liquors, and in my humble opinion, every one of you, gentlemen of the board, will regret it."

"Does the young man dare to *imprecate* the board of *exercise?* Such language cannot be permitted. The young man will please take his seat. Boys like he should not presume to *label* the board. What does he know about licensed taverns, and by whose authority does he come here to instruct men like we are?"

Digitized by Google

McGarr grew pale with anger as he proceeded, and sat down with the air of one who felt that he had annihilated his man. But he was mistaken in the metal of Walter Brayton. The sneering tone and everbearing manner of the Deacon aroused the lion in him; and with a kindling eye and erect form he burst forth in a torrent of burning eloquence, which startled and thrilled by its power. The natural orator was there, and that audience, against him though they were, listened in wrapt attention.

"Yes," he spoke in conclusion, his clear ringing voice slightly tremulous with emotion, "your tavern will prove a curse. I cannot foretell all its results, but it will prove a curse. Deacon McGarr, in a manner and tone unworthy one of his profession, has sneered at my youth. My boyhood is no crime. Boy as I am, I could reveal a history which would draw tears from every eye—a history of hopes ruined —of suffering and of death."

"This cannot be tolerated; your stories have nothing to do with the matter before the board," exclaimed McGarr, in a loud and angry tone. "You will take your seat, sir."

"I have done, Deacon McGarr — my painful duty is performed." Here Walter caught his father's eye, now flashing with anger, and he continued.

"You ask me by what authority I come here. I have the same right as every other American citizen. In behalf of the women and children of this community; of a sorrowing, broken-hearted mother who is

Digitized by Google

at rest in her grave; by that well-worn Bible which rum snatched from her dying pillow; by ten thousand histories of wrong and suffering, I most solemnly protest against this proceeding. You will see the time when you will curse this day with hearts of deepest bitterness, every one of you. I have done."

"*And it ought to be cursed!*"

A strangely deep and startling voice broke in upon the stillness which followed the speech of Walter Brayton. There was a movement to see from whence it came, and McGarr, livid with ill-suppressed rage, called out,

"Who is that?"

"One *your* tavern is to benefit, *Deacon* McGarr," and he stepped up in fair view, and fixed his fiery red but piercing eye full upon the dignitary he addressed. We recognize our acquaintance in the seaman's jacket and broad-brimmed tarpaulin.

"The man is drunk — he is drunk, put him out — Constable Gaston, put him out — I order you!"

The dignity of the waspish official had been too deeply insulted, and he fairly danced with excess of rage.

"Put him out, I say—I order you to put him out," and the exasperated Deacon snatched his glasses off and pointed to where the seaman still stood, looking calmly and sneeringly upon the scene. Gaston good-naturedly laid his huge hand on the man's shoulders and led him peacefully down stairs.

That speech of Walter Brayton's was a glorious one

Digitized by Google

for that day, but the granting of the license was a foregone conclusion, and as soon as the excitement had subsided, the board, after some favorable remarks from Colonel Weston, proceeded to complete the business which had called them together, and the "Traveler's Home" was licensed. That evening and the following day the "Home" was open to all, and liquors free.

— The first results were in progress.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VII.

DEATH IN THE ATTIC.

Darkness rests like a pall upon the streets which are now deserted. The busy throng which has swept the thoroughfares until late at night, has ceased to flow, and the great metropolis no longer throbs its living tide through the accustomed arteries. The snow has been falling fast for an hour, and the sharp gusts sweep round the corner and go wailing down the dim avenues, as if sorrowing for human woe. The lamp lights gleam pale and sickly out through the storm. The policemen, or some reveller, and the winds, alone disturb the silence that reigns.

Turn downward where the lepers of want and vice have gathered as if in sympathy. The foul crater is active, for its more deadly fumes ascend in the darkness of the night. Down below the surface of earth, are pits where the ruffianly and the vile are at their revels. There is a faint, deathly glare from the dirty windows, and, in spite of the wintry blast, an occasional breath of the rum hell reeking beneath. And then there often comes up some startling ha! ha! to mingle with the shrieking of the wind.

Here is a dark alley, scarce wide enough to admit a person, and running back where no light breaks in

Digitized by Google

upon the impenetrable darkness. The foot strikes a step and we climb upward upon a creaking flight of stairs. The snow and wind whirl fiercely over the roof and shake the crazy structure to its foundation, but we lean closer to the walls and mount upward.

Five stories up, and we stand upon a narrow platform and peer down with a whirling brain into the black ocean below. Turning into a narrow hall, we stand before a shattered door, revealing a feeble light within. Even in this winter night, the miasma of pollution floats through the building like a pestilence.

What a scene, as we enter that chamber! Here poverty and want grin in their ghastly loneliness and solitude. The silence of desolation broods over all, and the faint lamp-light flickering to its wane, is like the beam which creeps up from the exhalations of the grave. There is not a coal in the grate, nor a chair in the room. The gusts of wind sift the snow through the cracks by the door, and an involuntary chill steals over the surface and then into the heart. Starvation, gaunt, pinched and spectral, stalks before the imagination, and mingles a footfall with every gust that rattles the shattered door.

— And do human creatures dwell in such abodes as this?

Hist!

There is a sound in that dark corner. There is a sigh as if a life of agony were crushed at once from the heart. And then a spectre form slowly rises and

Digitized by Google

stalks towards the light. It is a woman, but God! how thin and haggard! A fiercer gust shakes the old building. She stands in a listening attitude, as its low wail dies away, and then, wildly staring at vacancy, takes her seat mechanically upon a box by the light. Her face is thin, and every feature the footprint of unutterable agony. The eyes are sunken and inflamed, but as tearless as her cheek and lip are bloodless. The latter is thin and drawn closely, as if in mortal suffering, over her teeth.

She leans towards the waning taper, and takes a garment in her hand upon which she has been sewing. How fearfully tearless and calm she appears. We look until some nightmare fascination chains us to the spot. Save a startling wildness about the eye, it would not seem that those features had ever been stirred by a human passion. She holds her hands towards the light in the attempt to thread her needle, but fails; and still, with her hands extended, stares at the dim taper.

There is a stirring in the heap of rags beside her, and the woman starts as if stung by an adder. The faintest flush passes over her cheek, and she mutters to herself as she more hurriedly essays to thread the needle.

From that heap of rags a boy has come forth! Child of ten years, perhaps — he stands before that spectral mother, and in husky whispers asks for bread. She stares strangely into his face, and still mutters to herself.

Digitized by Google

The boy is almost naked and shivering with cold, and upon those childish features hunger has written enough to pierce the hardest heart. The very look is a hopeless, heart-breaking agony. The child bows his head in that woman's lap with a sob-like moan, and then moves with a languid step to the grate and lays his fingers, already blue with cold, upon the frosty iron. The chill causes him to start, and he returns moaning to the woman. The hand has fallen in her lap, and the boy lays his cold cheek down upon it and weeps. She laughs! but it is the low, horrible ha! ha! of the maniac!

"Mother! dear mother, give me one mouthful of bread. Hain't there bread enough where Pa has gone? Mother, will God give me bread if I say my prayers?"

The child kneels, and the prayer his mother taught him goes feebly up against the wail of the blast, and then, with weariness and hunger, the little pleader falls to sleep on his knees, his head on his mother's hand.

—That mother smiles as she still stares at vacancy.

The storm has passed, and the morning light of the Sabbath dawns upon the great city. The church bells are pealing out the Sabbath melody, and gay throngs of people are wending along to the richly furnished churches. Here are shawls which

Digitized by Google

a queen might envy, and equipages of princely splendor.

Early this Sabbath morning, a cold-hearted landlord goes up the lone stairway for the promised pittance of rent, and knocks at the door, which the reader has already entered. He awaits but a moment and angrily enters.

"No playing games with me, madam. That money or *leave*. D'ye hear, woman?"

The ruffian was used to scenes of suffering, but he started back at the one before him. That pale, haggard woman-spectre was still seated by the lamp now burned out, the garment and needle in her hand, and that horrible smile upon her features, and that wild eye gazing into vacancy.

The lamp had burned down and died out in its socket. The lamp of life, too, had waned during that cold, dreary night, and a corpse sat there, holding the needle in the emaciated fingers, and smiling in death. The boy slept against the rigid and pulseless form of the toil-worn, heart-broken, hungered mother.

That day the officer entered the fireless chamber to remove the dead seamstress. In that dark corner, where the woman was first seen, was the husband. He had been a corpse for more than *ten days*, and she toiling to escape starvation, and watching with the shroudless, unburied dead.

The two found a home and an endless rest in "Potter's Field," and the pinched and starving boy, bread in the alms-house.

Digitized by Google

Another act in the great tragedy of intemperance had been played out, and the curtain of wintry clod and snow closed upon the principal actors. The fashionable throng passed from their churches, while the starved paupers went to their graves.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VIII.

A WEDDING AT THE COTTAGE — "ONLY ONE GLASS."

Across the stream, upon the overhanging bank, was one of the loveliest spots in the village. The village doctor dwelt here. The cottage was nearly hidden in a dense grove of sugar maples, dotted here and there with green pyramids of the spruce and the fir, and the clean gravel walk wound deviously among the shrubbery from the threshold to the gate, through a rich carpeting of green. Autumn had already commenced its language of beauty upon the foliage; and, mixed with the more copious green of summer, was the golden yellow, with scattering tufts of scarlet, gleaming like wreaths of flame in the pure October sunlight. The eaves of the cottage were green with moss, and the wild vines had crept up one corner and clung closely to the old water trough, and dropped in graceful festoons before the quaint old window in the gable. Back of the dwelling were two old pear trees, reaching far up into the sky, and their trunks green with the moss of years. A little farther, and the grape had climbed into a wild plum, and an impenetrable canopy of cool green network hung gracefully above the old seat at the roots. Sloping back from the garden, was a meadow reaching down until the turf dip-

Digitized by Google

ped its long green fringe into the stream. Back of all, the hills beat up against the sky with their robing of dark evergreen, flecked here and there with the crimsoning maple or yellow birch.

— One might hunt for years and not find a lovlier spot.

Ten years before the time of which we are writing, there was sorrow in the old cottage. The sun smiled sweetly in the west and into the high old windows, but there were dark shadows on hearts within. An old man was wrestling with death. Delirium was upon him, and he raved in his madness of a stranger name, and cursed and died. The orphan child who had never known a mother, wept in all the bitterness of childhood's grief upon the corpse of her father. She knew not that the madness which swept the sky of his life's last evening, was the madness of the bowl. She found herself alone in the old cottage, a beauti ful, sorrowing orphan.

But childhood's sorrows pass away. The sun smiles upon the tear-drops of the passing storm. Ten years went by, and the orphan child had bloomed into faultless womanhood, and moved a star in the circles around her, for she was as good as she was lovely.

The gifted and noble young Howard had settled in the place and commenced the practice of medicine. His talent, professional skill, and high moral worth, made him at once a favorite. He was a young man of rare promise, though without means. His practice

Digitized by Google

led him to form the acquaintance of the lovely orphan, and a strong mutual attachment sprang up between them.

One evening in June there was a gathering at the cottage, and light-hearted throngs rustled up the walks to the shadowy old porch. Lights streamed from the windows, and pleasant voices went out upon the still and balmy air. Merry groups gathered upon the soft greensward, or tripped with low whispers through the balcony, hidden by green jealousies and pendant boughs. An ocean of pure moonlight bathed the world in its mellow flood.

A wedding party has gathered — Howard and the fair orphan are to stand at the altar.

All was light and joy in the old cottage. The "Doctor" was a favorite, and the invitation had been general; and the old and the young of both sexes were gathered on the occasion.

There was a sound of merry voices floating from the open windows out upon the calm night air, with a pleasant mingling of laughter and music. The parson had not yet made his appearance, and spirits were buoyant and tongues unfettered.

"Is what I hear true, Colonel, about the Doctor? Or is it some neighborhood gossip?"

This question was put by Miss Anson, (next to the orphan heiress, the belle of the village,) to Colonel Weston, a young and wealthy farmer, as they were promenading arm in arm up and down the gravel walk in front of the mansion.

Digitized by Google

"To what do you allude, Miss Anson?" answered Weston.

"Why, have n't you heard? — why, it is the neighborhood talk that the Doctor refuses to have wine at his wedding!"

"Is it possible! I had not heard it before. But surely he will not so far depart from propriety and fashionable custom, as to treat his friends and guests thus disrespectfully?"

"I don't know about that. Miss Knight told me last evening, and she says that Miss Nelson's brother told her, that the Doctor positively refused to have wine at his wedding. I fear there is something in it."

"Surely," replied the Colonel, in unfeigned astonishment, "the Doctor cannot be so beside himself. I know he is somewhat eccentric in these matters, but what unaccountable whim has come over him now?"

"I don't know. But if he persists, it will do him a great injury. It is already the town talk. Some friend should see him and talk him out of it. Not have wine at a wedding! and belonging, too, to the first society?"

Miss Anson felt indignant at such a contemplated violation of fashion and good breeding, and proceeded to commiserate the feelings of the bride under circumstances so mortifying to her pride and good taste.

"Well, well," said Colonel Weston, musingly, "this will never do. I will see Doctor Howard myself. He must not take a step so objectionable and

Digitized by Google

improper. Let me surrender my pleasant post, Miss Anson, to Mr. Mason for a few moments, while I go to do my friend a kindness."

"I will most cheerfully accept the trust, Colonel Weston, and shall not look anxiously for your return. Colonel Weston bowed, and passed into the house.

"Have *you* heard anything of this strange freak of Doctor Howard, about not having any wine at his wedding, Mr. Mason?"

"I suppose I know something of the matter, and must say that I regret that it is true. The housekeeper came yesterday and got the wine at our store, but it was without the knowledge of Howard. Mistress sent her."

"How strange you talk! What on earth can have possessed the man to take such a course?"

"Indeed, Miss Anson, it is as strange to me as to all his friends. If he persists in such folly, it will injure him most deeply throughout the community. Such a breach of propriety would hardly be forgiven."

"Injure him?—indeed it will! His friends should look to the matter. Colonel Weston has already gone to reason him out of his singular determination. Not have wine at a wedding? Who ever heard of the like?"

"Let us hope, Miss Anson, that this matter will all yet pass off properly. No one would regret more than myself, such conduct in a gentleman of Doctor Howard's character and standing."

Digitized by Google

The matter had already got noised about, and other groups were discussing the question with as much earnestness as though the future happiness and position of the young couple depended upon the circulation of wine among the wedding guests.

While the groups in the yard and on the veranda, were discussing the matter in whispers, there was another discussion in the chamber. There was Doctor Howard and his young bride, awaiting the arrival of the parson.

"Well, Henry," spoke Miss James, in low tones, "I do not wish to insist on having the wine handed around. On my own part, I care nothing about it; but what will the people say?"

"Let us not care, dear one, what people say. I do not like to be a slave to custom, and especially to a custom which I know to be wrong."

"You speak earnestly, Henry, of a very fashionable custom. What objection can you have—how do you know it is wrong? I am sure I am anxious to see the matter in the light that you do, but I fear our friends will be offended if we banish wine on this occasion. Do you not?"

"They might, but it seems to me that if they knew what I know, they would shun the accursed cup of the enchantress."

The bride was startled at the depth and energy of Howard's tones, and watched with interest the shadows that passed over his fine countenance. There was sadness there, for the gifted and noble man was

Digitized by Google

looking away upon the dark canvass of childhood, where still lingered the scene of a boy, hungry and cold, weeping himself to rest in the lap of a dead mother in the garret. The boy had learned in after years, the cause of his early bereavement and suffering, and shrunk from the glass as he would from a serpent's hiss.

"No, no," sadly spoke Howard, as he aroused himself from his musing, "do not over persuade me in this matter. I may be asking much, but there is a shadow of a coming ill resting upon me, and I cannot shake it off, and it seems strongly associated with this wine business. Agree with me in this, Ellen, and I will bless you always."

Howard stood before her, and a tear came upon her own lid as she saw his sad face. She laid her hand in his affectionately and smiled.

"You have conquered — let it go as you wish. I will not press you now, but some time hence I will ask you why you so earnestly urge this strange wish, for I am sure there is much behind it all, which you have not told me."

There was a hush in the room, and the talking nearly ceased — the parson had arrived. As his tall form and cold, severe countenance appeared in the hall, a change fell upon the spirits of the company. He bowed stiffly, and turned his dull grey eye searchingly upon those in the room. That face will become familiar to the reader — the parson is *Snyder*.

The marriage ceremony was completed. Conver

Digitized by Google

sation had just commenced briskly again, when the old house-keeper beckoned Howard from the hall door. As he passed into the hall, he found young Mason expostulating with the old lady about the wine question. Mason insisted that the wish of Howard was a mere whim, and that, as a friend, he should take the liberty of sending around the wine. This the old lady refused assent to without the knowledge of Howard, and so beckoned him out.

Upon learning the reason why he was called out, a shade of anger settled upon his features, and he asked sternly why the matter had thus been broached, after his wishes had been made known.

"Nay, but you must pardon us," replied Mason. "As a friend, I insist that on this occasion you shall not persist in so wide a departure from the customs of well-regulated society. You wrong yourself and give offence to your friends. The people will think, Howard, that you are mad."

"I do not see," replied Howard, promptly, "why the people, as you call them, should interfere or meddle with a matter of this kind, which only concerns me and mine. I have my own reasons for this departure from what you call the customs of well-regulated society — a custom, however, which, permit me honestly to affirm, it were far more honorable to repudiate than to adopt. If you are my friends, you ought not to insist longer upon this violation of my earnest wishes. You will pardon my seeming warmth, for you who know me will believe that I

Digitized by Google

have reasons for my course which are satisfactory to myself."

Howard turned on his heel and was passing through the group which had gathered, when Colonel Weston came up — he having learned the subject under discussion. The Colonel was an impulsive, frank, bold man, and had already tested the wine by the favor of the old house-keeper.

"High times, indeed, Howard, when you deliberately attempt to freeze up the happiness of this occasion, by withholding that which gives joy its purest flow. As a commanding officer, I shall order you under arrest, and declare martial law. Mason, follow me."

With a laugh and a graceful bow, Colonel Weston turned away, followed by Mason. Howard passed slowly into the parlor, where he had hardly entered into the gayeties of the occasion, when in came Weston and Mason, with the server and wine. A deep red flush passed over Howard's face as he saw them, and his eye kindled with anger. On any other occasion he would have openly resented the insult. But he was taken by surprise, and remained in his seat, feeling deeply indignant.

Weston came up and handed the wine to the bride. She looked doubtingly in the face of Howard, and mechanically took a glass from the server.

"Nay, my noble friend," said Weston, as he passed it to Howard, "no frowns, for I am alone responsible. But, sir, you surely will follow Mrs. Howard's exam-

Digitized by Google

ple, and take a glass of wine on your wedding night." There was a silence in the room and all eyes were turned upon the parties. More especially were the guests watching Howard. The silence was embarrassing, and the bride looked appealingly to him to relieve her from the unpleasant position. The wine trembled in her hand, and the smile passed from her face as she saw the half-sad, half-angry expression upon that of her husband.

None knew the mad whirl of Howard's thoughts, or saw the dark vision passing before him. Twenty years later, and none of this decision and moral courage would have hesitated a moment. But an old and dangerous custom was hanging over him, and he knew not which way to turn or what to do. His better angel bent sadly over him, watching the wily efforts of the tempter to fasten the first cords of the fatal mesh upon a new victim.

"Take it, Howard," urged Weston, with a smile, "one glass would not harm an angel. This is a night and an occasion to honor with the flowing beaker. We must wish you and your bride long years of happiness in the future in the mellow blood of the grape. You surely will not disappoint your friends on your wedding night."

Weston bent his eye full upon Howard with a winning smile, and held the full glasses nearer to him. Howard, alone within himself, wrestled bravely against the wily approach of the insidious enemy, and he lifted his eyes to his bride, the full round

Digitized by Google

drops stood thickly upon a brow more than usually pale, and his features wore an expression of pain.

"Why, how ungallant you are—Doctor Howard refuse a glass of wine on your wedding night, and your lady waiting your action! Colonel, shall *we* drink to the bride? Surely so lovely a one deserves such a compliment upon such an occasion."

Weston followed the example of Miss Anson, and they both stood with glasses in hand. The bride leaned towards Howard and whispered in his ear:

"One glass—just this once, for my sake, and never again."

"*Never again!*"

The company started as the words were echoed in a deep measured tone from some unknown source. But no one chose to speak of the occurrence, and Miss Anson, looking towards the spot where the parson was standing, said:

"You, reverend sir, will have to set this refractory gallant an example, and with Weston and myself, drink to the bride. Should he not drink?"

Elder Snyder stepped forward and took a glass. Now, at the appeal of the bride, however, Howard had reached out to take one from the server, when the company were again startled by that mysterious voice.

"*Touch it not!*"

Elder Snyder frowned and raised himself to his full height, as he turned his eyes upon all in the room, to see who had dared to interrupt the charm which was

Digitized by Google

weaving. Pale and embarrassed, Howard sat with the cup in his hand, that gaze still fixed upon some scene hidden from the gaze of the guests. It was a scene for the pencil. The party had gathered in a group, the tall form and dark features of the false teacher, the manly-looking Weston, and the light form of the beautiful Miss Anson leaning slightly against his shoulder, the lovely bride, and the victim yielding slowly to the coils which were closing round him. It was a noble group of noble men and fair women, and yet one over which a good angel might have wept.

"This," said the pastor, as he held the glass between his eyes and the lamp, "is one of the good gifts of God to man, the blood of the grape, the beverage of the high, the noble and the good of all ages. It—

"*And of the lost and the damned!*"

All turned to see whence came that voice, now more startingly energetic and ringing with bitterness. A deeper frown gathered on the features of Elder Snyder, and he, in dogged tones, continued:

"It is a beverage which our Saviour used. He made it at the *wedding* (the Elder emphasized the word,) and dispensed it at the last supper. The Scriptures plainly enjoin the use of wine. Noah drinked it, it was given to those that were ready to perish, it maketh the heart merry, cureth our infirmities, and causeth the poor to forget his poverty, and the afflicted their sorrow. It gives a man strength and joy, and enables him to bear more cheerfully the

Digitized by Google

changing scenes of life. The Redeemer made and drank wine. It would be sinful for us to set at naught such teachings, and put away so great a blessing. I will drink to the happiness of those whom God has this night joined together."

Elder Snyder turned off the wine with the air of one who expected all to follow his example. And they all did, Howard among the rest.

"*At last it stingeth like an adder and biteth like a serpent!*"

"Who is that?" angrily asked Elder Snyder, as that strange and startling voice again fell like a serpent's hiss upon the ears of the company.

"*The lost one of a false teacher!*" slowly came back in reply, with more thrilling distinctness than before. All eyes were turned toward the veranda window, where now stood a tall, broad-shouldered man, dressed in a coarse suit of sailor's clothes, a weather-beaten tarpaulin on his head, and his hair standing out wiry and matted under the broad brim. His eye was grossly red, and was cast full upon the group, at last resting keenly and firmly upon Elder Snyder. There was a fearful intensity in the gaze, and the sallow features of the pastor reddened and glowed with increased anger.

"From whence do you come, and why are you here to intrude upon respectable people?" angrily continued Elder Snyder, as he walked menacingly towards the window.

"Came from my mother's grave to see a wine-bib-

Digitized by Google

bing priest, and *only one glass at a wedding!*— *Ha, ha!*"

The strange and unaccountable apparition turned away, and that peculiar wild and sneering laughter rung shrill upon the air, and fell like an omen of evil upon the darkened heart of Howard.

—"*Only one glass!*" And will it be so, reader?

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IX.

FIRST FRUITS.

On the morning after the wedding, Doctor Howard arose with an aching head and troubled thoughts. The "only one glass" had been the voice of the tempter; but once launched on the treacnerous tide, he was driven away from shore. Friends grew more friendly as wine went round, and glass followed glass until Howard — the resolute and strong-willed Howard — reeled on his wedding night. He became wild as the subtle currents shot through his veins, and by the time the company dispersed, his garrulous and slavering nonsense had pained and mortified his truest friends. Yet not one of them for the first moment felt that they had contributed to the disgrace of their friend. But such things were not looked upon then as now, and the guests went to their homes, mellow themselves, and as ready to get mellow again on the morrow.

It was early when Howard dressed himself and passed out into the cool morning air. Its breath was grateful to his hot and throbbing brow, but it reached not the throbbing thoughts in his heart. "*As you value your soul's interest, remember your mother — never touch the intoxicating cup!*" He felt the words of that mother burning like a brand upon his feverish

Digitized by Google

cheek, and her eyes looking into his heart. In a letter left for his perusal, Howard had learned the history of his mother — the ruin and horrible death of his father; and it all now came before him, until he shrunk within himself as from accusing spectres.

The man who never takes the first step from the path of right is never endangered. That step once taken, others follow with fearful ease. The anchor once lifted from the heart's integrity, the vessel drifts away before the storms that beat in from every quarter. To-day a man stands firm, and looks proudly in the face of his fellows, and feels himself a man. He has his own self-respect. To-morrow he is for once induced to step aside, and like a breach in the wall the enemy comes in like a flood. A trifling act in itself — the one glass drinked with a friend, — may seal the fate of the unwary.

Howard had lost strength. He had been beaten in the contest — beaten when he felt that he was right. The idea of being a drunkard had not yet occurred to him. It was only his own loss of firmness and self-respect, and a shadowy sense of some unknown danger, that now weighed him down.

The festivities which followed the wedding were not calculated to fasten the resolutions which were giving away. Wine was everywhere, and everybody used it. He himself began to think that it would be a bold and unpardonable breach of custom to refuse it with his friends. The decanter and tumbler seemed to be the insignia of fashionable society. Thus he

Digitized by Google

reasoned as day followed day and glass followed glass, the strong and noble purpose which had been so sacredly cherished to the noon of his manhood, growing less strong under the steady approaches of the tempter.

On the day after the meeting of the board, Howard was riding rapidly up the road, when he was accosted from the steps of the "Home."

"Halloo, Howard! Where now at that break-neck pace? Hold up a minute."

The voice was Colonel Weston's, and, as Howard turned his head, he saw a number of people standing on the stoop. His first impulse was to put spurs to his horse, but Weston was a favorite friend, and he reined up. As Weston came up and laid his hand on the mane of the horse, Howard noticed that he was considerably under the influence of liquor. There was a silly leer upon his countenance, and his manner had that bold and half insolent air about it, so contrary to his usually quiet and gentlemanly demeanor.

"Whoop! my (hic)—boy, which way, I say?" and the Colonel grasped tightly the arm of Howard, and roughly attempted to pull him from the saddle.

"I beg your pardon, Colonel, but you will not detain me, for I am in haste to call on a sick patient."

Digitized by Google

"Devil take your patient; you must get off and take a drink," and again, with that strong grasp peculiar to drunken men, Weston wrenched him nearly from his saddle.

"You must get off and take a drink. Why, I haven't seen you before since your wedding. Get off, old boy, I say, and drink with us!" and he fetched Howard a heavy slap on the thigh with the awkwardness peculiar to those in liquor, and laughed boisterously.

Howard was shocked, and mildly essayed to release himself from the Colonel's grasp.

"No you don't, my boy; you must drink. Soldiers, unhorse (hic) him," and he led the horse up the steps into the stoop, amid the laughter of the half-drunken crowd.

Howard was fairly pulled from his saddle and led into the bar-room and the liquor called on.

"One drink, Doctor, with your friends," as he bowed and played the buffoon before the bar. Howard remained silent while the liquors were mixing. As Weston took his glass from the counter, he again essayed to release himself by pleading haste to see his patient.

"No you don't, Doctor — you must drink with us," and he handed another glass to Howard.

The latter took it mechanically, and was about to set it on the counter, when the Colonel grasped it, and, setting down his own, wound his left arm around Howard's neck, attempted to pour the liquor down

Digitized by Google

his throat. The act was so quick that the latter had not time to close his mouth before the glass was between his teeth, and the liquor running down his face and neck into his bosom. He strangled badly, which pleased the rum-maddened crowd all the more. Weston was wild with rum, and swore that Howard should drink. The latter grew indignant and began to denounce such rudeness. Weston caught another tumbler of the liquor which had been prepared, and sprung upon Howard with all the reckless, frenzied strength of partial intoxication, crowding the glass against his lips and teeth until the blood mingled with the stains of the brandy from the corners of his mouth.

"By ——! Doctor, you must take in your bits," continued Weston, and, in the excitement of the mo ment, he caught Howard by the throat, and continued pushing the now empty glass into his open and bleeding mouth. The crowd were all wild with merriment, and stood upon the chairs and benches to see the sport. Weston set the glass down upon the counter and called for more liquor. Hermon poured it out. As Weston, with his hand yet clinched in the Doctor's cravat, was passing the glass again to his lips, against his indignant expostulations, Howard released his right arm from the tipsy fellow who was holding it, and dealt Weston a blow on the temple which laid him prostrate on the floor. There was stillness for a moment, and Howard was released from the grasp of those who were holding him. As Weston came to

Digitized by Google

and began to rise, he literally frothed with rage, and sprung at the Doctor like a madman. The latter evaded his clutch, and he plunged headlong amongst the crowd.

"*For shame!* Are ye men or devils?" All were startled at the sound of a female voice, and, as they turned, saw Minnie Hermon standing in the stairway, pale and trembling, but her eyes kindling at the scene before her. A rocket could not have produced more confusion among them. The majority abruptly went out, leaving Weston, now abashed and cowering, and Hermon, alone behind the bar. Howard washed his face at the pump and rode away, and, as he thought over the scene in the bar-room of the "Home," a sigh came from his heart and a tear from his eye. He looked at his bruised hand, and wondered how he came to strike one he esteemed so much.

—But there will be stranger scenes there.

Deacon McGarr lived just below the "Home," and on the afternoon of the same day the affair occurred which we have related, he was to have a wagon-house raised. As a matter of course, rum must be had at a "raising." A two-gallon jug was sent to the "Home" and filled, and the hands invited. Deacon McGarr had drinked liberally in the earlier part of the day, and felt happy and witty. About one o'clock the hands began to gather, and very naturally lingered on the stoop and steps of the "Home." When the hour came for commencing operations, McGarr came over, and, for the purpose of supporting the new tav

Digitized by Google

ern, "treated all round." In high glee the company then followed him to the ground and commenced operations.

To those who are familiar with the drinking usages of other days, we need not speak in detail of a "raising." Enough to say that horns of whisky were deemed just as absolutely necessary as pikes or pins. As each "bent" was raised to its place, the jug was "passed round" by some boy, accompanied by one with a pail of cold water. As soon as a "bent" was raised, some of the more active ones mounted to the top. By the time the plates were ready to go on, a number were thus gathered above, and the jug must be passed up and welcomed by such. Before the building was all up, a large class was noisy and mellow.

Among others who first went upon the frame, was Weston. Naturally athletic, he now felt doubly so under the influence of his deep potations. McGarr would have persuaded him from the dangerous risk, but Weston was reckless.

The plates were framed to go on to the ends of the beams, requiring much care in holding them and entering the tenons. The timbers were yet damp from the rain during the night, and required caution in handling them without accident. The ends of the plates were first carried up to the beams, then carried forward and balanced up and shoved to their places, preparatory to entering the tenons. When ready to carry out, a man lay down and locked his

Digitized by Google

arms around the beam, and with his feet against the plate, pushed it as it lay, as near the tenons as was safe. Weston was at the end, and straightened with all his strength, and the piece slid upon the slippery beam near a foot and a half clear from his feet. A dozen voices from below earnestly cautioned him to be careful—if the plate should go off it would kill some one.

"Let 'em look out for themselves," he replied, with a peculiar laugh, and again backed until his feet reached the timber, and then straightened with all his power. There was a yell from twenty voices below, and the heavy stick fell to the ground. A sharp cry of pain told its effect. Hermon's leg was under it, and ground to a pumice. The groans of the wounded man, as he was borne bleeding to the "Home," sobered Weston, as he saw the result of his folly, and the big drops gathered on his brow. Silently and thoughtfully he went from the frame, and passed after the group to the tavern.

"Come, boys," said Gaston, the blacksmith, "we can do no good over there, let's up with the plate again, and put on the rafters."

Another drink round and they took hold with a will, for Gaston set them an example. The stick was soon in its place and the rafters up.

Young McGarr was the last one standing on the ridge. His father saw that he had drinked too much, and called him down. He started to obey, but met the jug again coming up, and took a drink with the rest. The hot draft made him bold and reckless, and

Digitized by Google

he swore he would walk the ridge-pole with jug in hand before he left the frame. No entreaty or threatening could change his mad determination, and he clambered carelessly to the ridge. They watched him with breathless attention, for it was plain to see that he was intoxicated. Deacon McGarr was pale, and his lip was pressed between his teeth until the blood started from under them.

Young McGarr succeeded in walking the entire length, and, as he arrived at the end, he turned, and, swinging the jug in the air, huzza'd and turned it up to his lips. As he threw his head back in the act, he fell from the ridge, his head striking upon a green beech log, and his body doubling lifelessly down in a heap. McGarr shrieked and jumped to save his boy, and the shriek was echoed with more piercing, soul-harrowing distinctness from the house, where the boy's mother had been watching the scene with trembling lips and limb. Gaston lifted the boy in his arms, leaving masses of his brains upon the log and ground, and the blood ebbing out with a spinning sound from the crushed head. The mother looked once upon the bleeding and disfigured mass, and sank insensible to the ground. On a board the crushed boy was borne to the house, while equally as tenderly the corpse-like mother was carried after in the arms of Gaston. Deacon McGarr followed like a child in his first great sorrow. The jug was left in fragments, thickly sprinkled with the blood of the young victim.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER X.

THE AUTHOR TALKS — A LAPSE OF TEN YEARS IN OUR HISTORY — THE CHANGE.

In one of the villages of Pennsylvania — it is written — the members of the excise board were assembled, as usual, for the purposes of granting licenses for the sale of intoxicating liquors. After smoking, and chatting upon general subjects for a time, the customary motion was put, and opportunity given for remark. Up in one corner of the room the attenuated form of a woman arose, spectral-like in features, and meanly clad, and looking upon the members present from sockets hollow and ghastly. In tones of sadness, growing more full and intense as she proceeded, the strange intruder commenced a history of sorrow, of ruin and wrong, which fell upon the astonished group like a spell. Her form raised as she gathered strength, and her tones grew fierce, and a hectic flush came out upon the palid cheek. Fixed to their seats and gazing upon the kindling eye, the excisemen listened to the blistering record. From the smouldering ruins of life's hopes blasted, the scathing truths leaped out. She had heard of their meeting, and from the almshouse came forth to denounce the wickedness they were about to commit. Hers had been the history of thousands — a history

Digitized by Google

now being wrought out in thousands of hearts and homes. Across the river, a luxurious home, a noble husband, and three promising sons had woven her life's happiness with the golden woof of light and love. They were tempted and fell. The home passed into the tempter's hands, her husband and children to premature graves, and she to the pauper's home. Years of darkness and anguish could be known only to the God of the widow and the fatherless. "You see me now," she continued, with her tall form leaning forward and her long finger extended and trembling with emotion, resting unerringly upon the members of the board, "and know from whence I come. You know my history, and how bitterly all my hopes of this world have been wrecked. And you, sirs, caused it all. At your store my husband learned to drink, and you dwell in my home. You, false teacher," pointing to a deacon, "lured my noble boys to your grocery, and they now are in drunkards' graves. You destroyed them. But for you, husband, sons — all might have now blessed my old age. I have come from the county poor-house to lift a voice against your acts. Look at me, and then if you dare, before high Heaven, grant licenses to sell intoxicating drinks!"

The silence of death rested upon the listeners to the pauper's freezing words, interrupted only as one after another of the cowering officials stole like guilty wretches from the room, not staying to accomplish the work for which they assembled. From her quiv-

Digitized by Google

ering finger the words had fallen like drops of blistering lava into their coward hearts.

As the mind has swept back through the history of the past, we have often thought of the pauper and her speech. If those who suffer — if the ragged and the sorrowing, should come from their abodes of wretchedness, where, unseen, the scalding tear and the heavy sigh mark the crushing progress of woe, and in squalid garb and touching mien, gather around the excise boards of our country, and raise their protest against the wrong, we doubt whether there is a member of these bodies so utterly lost to every feeling of sympathy and shame as to put his name to the license of death. Let the sorrowing mother upon her staff, with her thin, white hairs, going down in sorrow to the grave, totter to the board, and with a dim eye and shaking voice, speak of children murdered, and an old heart running over with bitter memories. Let a wife steal forth from a home where a husband-demon reigns in the domestic hell. Yoked to a living corpse, she stands up with a ragged babe in her arms — a weeping heart attempting to shield the tenderest and most innocent of her idols from the storm — and with every hope buried in ruin, she demands why her home is desolated, her heart broken, and her babes robbed of bread. The sister comes, and with wringing hands claims that the noble and manly-hearted brother should be restored, for she has wept over him and clung to him with a sister's changeless love — her tears, and prayers, and holy affection weaker than

Digitized by Google

the gossamer web against the stronger than iron chains that bound him. Orphan children throng from hut and hovel, and public asylum, and lift their childish hands in supplication, asking at the hands of the guilty, those who rocked their cradles, and fed, and loved them. The maniac comes, and in insane gibberish and glaring eye, stares upon the "Court of Death." The murderer, now sober and crushed, lifts his manacled hands, red with blood, and charges his ruin — his own and his children's infamy, upon those who commission the Angel of the Plague. The felon comes from his prison tomb, the pauper from his dark retreat, where rum has driven him to seek an evening's rest and a pauper's grave. From the grave the sheeted dead stalk forth, and in spectral ranks gather around the scene, the eyeless sockets turned upon the actors, and the bared teeth grinning most ghastly scorn. The lost float up in shadowy forms, and wail in whispered despair. Demons, who rejoice in wrongs which make men more devilish than they, blush at the more than infernal wrong. Angels turn weeping away, and wonder that man can love his brother man, and still license the destruction of his hopes for two worlds. God upon his throne looks in anger upon the stupendous iniquity, and hurls a woe upon the hand which putteth the bottle to a neighbor's lip to make him drunken. Were every excise board girt by such an array, no man on earth would make himself an instrument in all this destruction. But their guilt is really the same. The injured

Digitized by Google

old mothers, the wives and the sisters, are found wherever rum is sold. The orphans plead eloquently in every community. The asylum, the alms-house, the dungeon and the scaffold bear their evidence, written in the unmistakable language of tears and blood. The dead heave their sodded graves on every hand, and revelation turns shudderingly away from the dark future of the thousands who die as the months roll round, while above, a God who counts the sparrows as they fall, sits in judgment and takes note of all. And yet — we write with a burning cheek — the excise boards of a free people meet with cool indifference and ask of a reckless few, "How many pieces of silver will you give us if we will betray the wives and the children — the helpless and the innocent, into your hands — *How many!*" The tribute is paid, and the people, with the price of blood in their coffers, hold the garments, while their licensed instruments stone men, women and children to death!

— No sane man on earth, if the fountains of evil were forever sealed, would ask that they might be again opened. Then why, in the name of crushed humanity and a hoped-for heaven, will men cling to the waning destinies of the monster iniquity?

The pursuit of an honorable avocation is a benefit to community. In the intercourse of trade, there is an equivalent rendered. The interests of the producer and the consumer are mutually advanced. Industry produces an aggregate prosperity and secures a prompt and adequate reward. Upright and perse-

Digitized by Google

vering labor, in any branch of business, vibrates through the whole social system, and helps to build up, adorn, and strengthen every honorable interest. The craftsman, the merchant, the professional man, the agriculturist — all who live by honest toil, are benefactors, and each fills an appropriate and necessary place in the social structure. There is no special regulation of these interests. They are useful and indispensable. Their pursuit tends to the general good. They do not exist or prosper at the ruin or extinction of others. The tradesman does not find the mercantile profession a legalized monopoly, and himself precluded, by penal statutes, from selling such as his neighbors sell. Talent and application master the legal and the medical professions, and the young man goes out to build up his fortunes wherever his prospects lure the brightest. The blacksmith asks no license to wield his hammer. The farmer does not annually ask and pay for a permit to put in his crops, to harvest and to sell. Whoever buys of him gets an equivalent for his money; and order, harmony and increase, mark the machinery of society.

But what a disturbing element is rum, in all society! It is the Pandorian box of unadulterated evil, with hardly a hope at the bottom. Nowhere on the green earth of God has it proved other than an unmixed curse. There is not a redeeming fact in its history. A darker, more cheerless, beaconless waste, never stretched away before the misguided pilgrim. There is not a ray of sunshine in ages of gloom. The

Digitized by Google

most ardent and honest friend of the rum traffic cannot point to one blessing it has conferred upon man since its first footprints cursed the earth. We have seen the system in its palmy days, but it was the plague in mid-day strength, stalking from house to house, its presence withering the greenness of the happiest life, and filling the land with wailing and unutterable woe. Commissioned by government, it has gone forth, the Angel of the Plague, and happy for hearts and homes, if they mourned for none but the first-born. In palace or hovel — in wealth or want, the shadow has fallen upon man and his hopes, the one to sicken and die, and the other to wither. *It enters society branded as an enemy.* The very power which sends it to our villages and hamlets, has written its character. It glides over our threshold in fetters, society mockingly decking its tail with regulating enactments, and leaving every fang bared for the work of death, and from tens of thousands of retreats endorsed and protected by government, the monsters go hissing forth with the injunction to desolate and kill within the prescribed limits, and according to law. The thief is imprisoned and the murderer is put out of the way; but here is a worse than a thief or a murderer — the subtle embodiment of all crime, allowed to carry on its devilish work under restrictions, and the effects sanctioned by legislation. It never yet entered a community without proving a curse. Some man has been degraded; some wife has been made to weep in anguish; some child has

Digitized by Google

been turned out of door to go hungry for bread; some pauper has been sent to the almshouse, or felon to the dungeon; some scene of blood and violence has been perpetrated, and the maddened instrument sent to the scaffold; some family has prematurely found a rest in the grave, and an escape from woes which will ever beggar description.

Oakvale was not an exception. A lovelier, more peaceful hamlet of happy settlers, was never hidden among the hills. Years went by, and scarce a cloud had fallen upon the cordial and friendly intercourse which had marked the history of the mountain retreat. The lives of the people passed with the calmness and purity of a summer's day. Scarce a ripple disturbed the sylvan quiet of the scene. Industry, virtue, integrity and kindly feeling marked the unrestrained intercourse of the genial and true-hearted people. The streets were quiet, only as stirred by the silver-voiced happiness of the schoolchildren, and the game of ball, the wrestle, or the leaping match, were the noisiest sports which awoke the quiet of the village green. The path to the village church was well beaten, and all was neat about the unpretending structure. The dwellings wore an air of comfort and thrift, and the yards and grounds were neat and attractive. The Sunday school was full, the Sabbath universally regarded, and the old-fashioned notions of truth and honor deeply rooted in a majority of hearts. Age was respected, and the white-haired grand-sires went down to their graves like the shocks fully ripened

Digitized by Google

for the harvest. The moustache and the rattan were unknown — the dice table, and the saloon. The young men were stalwart framed and industrious. Pianos, fashionable calls, and indolence in the parlor, were scarcely known, and yet there was true refinement; and from the kitchen, full, rounded forms and hearts all womanly passed out to mingle better currents in the busy world. Litigation was unknown; for each minded his own affairs, kept his fences up, kept his cattle and hogs within bounds, and treated his neighbor with kindness and sincerity. No gun ever broke upon the Sabbath stillness, nor boisterous gathering filled the streets; but the seasons came with their promise, and its harvest fulfillment, their flocks and herds, and household industry prospered, and peace, plenty, and contentment, the love of virtue and the fear of God, made Oakvale a spot where the current of life coursed ever with an even flow.

It was years afterwards, and when the population and business of Oakvale had greatly increased, that the "Home" was opened in the village. Ten years more had gone by, and what a transformation! It seemed incredible, and the stranger who saw it in its earlier history, would look sadly upon the change, and believe it wrought by some infernal magic. The rural neatness and quiet were there no more. The "Home" was a floodgate through which a thousand pernicious and evil influences swept in upon the society of the peaceful vale, a fatal undercurrent, undermining industry and virtue, and mingling the

Digitized by Google

most corrupting influences with the thoughts and habits of the people. From occasional visits to the tavern, the practice increased, until scarce one of the male population was not in the habit of spending his evenings at the tavern. A love of gossip was soon engendered, and every man's business and conduct was at times made the subject of conversation. In the conversation of the people, the change was as marked as in everything else. As the youth and the children listened, they caught the infection, and the oath, the rude and coarse speech, came from mouths prematurely foul by bad example and association. Ill-breeding soon marked the language of the boys, and slang phrases were current and eagerly learned and banded with a gusto. A low-bred pettifogger had followed in the wake of "business," and petty lawsuits were frequent, and always held at the tavern, drawing a crowd whenever held. Fights were of common occurrence, or petty disputes engendered in ill blood; and discord crept strangely in between families where years of uninterrupted harmony had marked their intercourse. Additional liquor shops, under the euphonious name of "saloons," had been opened, "ball-alleys" and "billiard-rooms." These places were a rendezvous on the Sabbath, the youth deserting the church for the dram-shop. They are ever craters of obscenity and profanity, and the youth of Oakvale were fast graduating in these devilish schools. The nights were occasionally hideous with unearthly yellings. Balls and "oyster parties" were

Digitized by Google

frequent, and respectable young men, at such times, were seen intoxicated. The blacksmith was often seen setting upon the steps of the "Home" in his leathern apron, and customers coming from his shop after him. The miller would leave his grist, and staid farmers would turn aside from their business, and drink, and spend an hour in chat. Company and general parades were now held at Oakvale, elections, town-meetings, etc., and drunkenness was common. Horse-racing, also, was frequent, and "turkey shoots," raffling and drinking, with frequent quarrels, and now and then a fight, contributed to demoralize the habits and foster the worst elements of those engaged in them.

"Business" had surely increased in Oakvale, and to the tavern belonged the credit. The change wrought in a few years was broad and impressive. The farms were neglected, the fences out of repair, and the yards and corners of the fences grown up to weeds. The barns and outhouses were dilapidated — boards off, and hovels unroofed. Hardly a farm retained the well-ordered and tidy appearance of industrious care, so conspicuous at the commencement of our history. Clap-boards were off, chimney tops crumbling away, and window-panes broken, old hats and rags, and pieces of board, indicating, in unmistakable language, the cause of all. Some houses were entirely in ruins, and the rank dock standing thickly in the yard, and the winds of winter whistling through the shattered structures. Fences were down

Digitized by Google

and fields turned to waste; the path to the church was overgrown with grass, and the sheds were falling to pieces, and the steps decaying, and the weather-beaten blinds unhinged, or slamming in the winds. The topmost section of the steeple had rotted and been blown off in a storm, and the bell, rusty and bare, frowned silently down upon the general desolation. The lightning-rod had been broken, and the end swung loose and unconnected. The village burial-ground had not escaped. Length after length of the board fence had fallen, and the cattle from the streets had broken the stones, and the hogs had rooted over the grounds. Unruly boys had torn away the school-house shed, while whole clapboards had been stripped from the building itself, the lath and the protruding mortar and naked studs, presenting to the passer-by the very picture of neglect.

But if the footsteps of intemperance were so blighting upon the appearance of buildings and fields, it was still more marked upon the population. The pathways to the groggeries were well beaten by the traveling public. Farms, shops and professions, were neglected. The happiest home had lost its attractions. The ruddy flame upon the evening hearth, the holy communion of the family circle, or the changeless ties of conjugal affection, were rent like threads for the false light of the dramshop. Even the church could not stay the work; its aisles had long been silent; the dust had gathered upon its communion altar and its Bible, and the spider spun his web in the

Digitized by Google

pulpit unmolested. Forms with red and watery eyes, hats with torn crowns, broken tops and distorted brims; garments thread-bare and ragged, the pantaloons fagged at the ancle and lodged upon gringy-looking boots run over at the heel; with swollen cheeks, and hands thrust to the elbows into their pockets, were constantly stealing to the dram-shops. By daylight, and before a chimney top had sent up a wreath of smoke, they could be seen standing by the dens, or knocking for admittance, creeping about over the stoops in the meantime, and shivering in the keen morning cold of the winter. How quickly their ears detected the sound of the bolt as it was drawn, and as quickly tossing the quid into the street and fetching their hand across their thigh as a napkin, cleared their throats and entered. They came out with the palms drawn across their lips, gave the hoarse ahem, and in the same manner retraced their steps to their doors. Women, with countenances pale and furrowed with sorrow and care, and wrapped closely in scanty garb, were seen gliding gloomily through the streets; and children, their uncovered hands purple in the cold, and their little forms shrinking at every breath, and often bending under the burden of the jug, thus bearing to their own homes the cause of their own wretchedness and hunger.

"Business" had increased! Oakvale had become a shire town, and two railroads had opened broad thoroughfares to and from. A courthouse and jail had been erected, and the new state-prison buildings

Digitized by Google

were rapidly going up. Men had died in the drunken brawl, by delirium tremens, and in the winter's path; the widow and her children had gone out from their broken homes to seek an asylum in the county poor-house; felons were in the jail, or at work on the prison walls, and red-handed murder had lifted a dripping hand at noonday, and the people were feasted with a view of the scaffold and its dangling tribute. A score of groggeries were seething and united in the work of ruin, and Oakvale had become a byword and reproach throughout the country for drunkenness and all its consequent and kindred evils. The change was a sad one, indeed. And yet no plague had come from the hand of God to destroy the people; no storm had swept down their fences or unroofed their barns and hovels; and the seasons had ever brought the seed time and harvest. But the blight was there. It rested upon house, and field, and toil; hunger and wretchedness brooded at the hearth; families were scattered, and fields turned to waste; and want, misery, indolence and vice resting like a deathly nightmare upon the quiet and happy hamlet of "long ago."

— "Business" was increasing!

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XI.

A WINTER SCENE.

It was in early winter, and the hubs lay up rough and bare through the snow. The wind was cutting cold, and shrieked dismally as it swept around the "Home." Scattering flakes of snow were sifting from the cold and sombre sky. People were already gathering in the bar-room, for nearly every citizen in the place had learned to love his drams; and the fire shone most welcomely in the old-fashioned hearth. Hermon, just recovered, in a measure, from a severe fit of sickness, was kneeling before a keg, drawing his morning bitters. One after another the customers went up to the bar and followed the example, conversation flowing more fluently as the liquor commenced its effects.

"Did you see Mat Ricks when he went away last night?"

"Yes — what of it?"

"Why, he was most devilish drunk, if *I'm* any judge."

"No live man a better judge," dryly remarked old Barney Kits, already intoxicated, and his lidless balls running water before the fire. A laugh followed the hit, and the speaker continued:

Digitized by Google

"Old Ricks has made a perfect fool of himself lately. He drinks like a fish. They say he abuses his family, too, most shamefully."

"He is not the only one who does that," again put in old Kits. Lame Tim, the speaker, turned an angry eye upon his tormentor, and chewed his tobacco nervously; yet he dare not measure wit with the inveterate wag, as drunk as he was.

"How is it, Tim," asked Gaston, "has old Ricks' farm all gone?"

"O, yes, all gone to smash;—nothing left at all. I knew 't would be so."

"But his wife had property?"

"Went with the rest. Jones has got it all."

"Sold his water and whisky well," put in old Barney.

"But what will become of his family?"

"Go to the poor-house, of course. I guess the old woman will come down some in her notions after this. Always was mighty nice feelin'. After all, I could n't help kind o' pittyin' on her when she came down here and cried, and took on so about the spoons her mother gave her—swow I could n't."

A scowl from old Hermon told garrulous old Tim that he had gone too far, and he changed the subject by taking another drink.

Doctor Howard at that moment drove up, and entered the bar-room in his bundle of furs, calling for a hot punch. While warming himself, he remained silent and thoughtful. This was enough for Tim.

Digitized by Google

He must know who was sick, what ailed him, and how long they were going to live; and with a preparatory ahem, he commenced:

"Anybody sick this morning, Doctor?"

"No more than usual."

"I thought ma'be somebody might be ailin' this mornin'."

"I presume there is," and the sententious Doctor continued to rub his hands before the welcome blaze.

"Come from over the hill?"

"Came from over the hill."

Old Barney grinned, and attempted to wink at the discomfited Tim. But the latter loved news next to a dram, and he returned to the attack.

"Plaguy cold this morning, Doctor!"

"Exactly — found that out myself."

"Anybody sick over the hill?"

"Nobody sick — all dead."

"Why, nobody but old Ricks' folks lived there."

"Exactly — and the folks are dead, or will be."

"You don't say so! How'd they die?"

"Go and see," and with the curt answer, Doctor Howard jumped into his sleigh and left.

There was truth in his briefly told story. On the previous evening, Ricks, with his father, an old revolutionary soldier, had caroused at the "Home" until a late hour, and with a jug apiece, had started out in the storm, amid many a drunken gibe as they stumbled over the hubs. In crossing the mountain at daylight, Doctor Howard had found the old man, lying

Digitized by Google

upon his face, frozen to death! He had struggled where he had fallen until the hubs were crimsoned with blood, and his face most horribly bruised. His hat lay crushed under his shoulders, and the handle of the broken jug was grasped firmly in death. The snow had lodged in his thin white locks, but his bald head was as bare to the night blast as the crag above him. Doctor Howard turned his horse and drove over the brow of the hill to the dwelling. A childish voice bade him "come in," in answer to his rap, and as he entered, crept into the farther corner.

Doctor Howard was used to scenes of distress, but he hesitated on the threshold, and stared for a full moment as he stood. It was but a moment, however, and he quickly asked the boy what it all meant. He only answered with a frightened look towards the bed. There lay Ricks, snoring in the deep slumbers of drunkenness, his clothes on, and the uncorked jug before him upon the stand. At the foot of the bed was a spectacle to freeze the blood. Stretched at full length was Mrs. Ricks, and upon the floor, mats of hair, its whitish blue ends indicating its violent wrenching from the living head. It had been wrenched from *her* head, and the bloody scalp lay bare in hideous spots. Above the ear the blade of the iron fire-shovel had cleft the skull, driving the hair into the brain, and splitting the ear through the rim. The blood had oozed out and ran down into the eye, where it was now frozen, the other glaring wildly in death and covered with frost.

Digitized by Google

"Who did this?" asked Howard of the boy, as he brushed a tear from his eye.

"*Father!*" whispered the child, creeping stealthily to the Doctor's side and looking from behind him towards the bed, and then, with his gaze still on the sleeping drunkard, he stole behind an old partition, and with wild eyes and bloodless lips brought something away in his hands, and scarce noticed by the Doctor, laid it by the side of the dead mother. Turning his eye at the moment, Howard started as at the sight of a serpent. There was the elbow and hand and little foot of a *babe!*

"For God's sake! what — what is this?" he asked, as he stooped to be sure that his eyes did not deceive him.

"Father — father," whispered the child, still keeping his gaze upon the bed — "threw baby out of the bed 'cause it cried, and then into the fire, and then struck me 'cause I screamed."

The tale — the sight, was horrible, and it was no dream; and there lay the imbruted murderer in his slumbers. Howard spoke sharply in the ear of the drunkard, but it was difficult to awake him. The moment he did awake, he called for Henry to hand him liquor. Ere Howard was aware, the terrified boy had taken the jug, when a fearful oath from his father startled him so suddenly that he dropped the jug upon the floor.

"*Hell!*" now roared the thoroughly awakened sot, and caught the boy violently by the arm. Henry

Digitized by Google

screamed with agony, and Howard noticed that the arm was broken above the elbow and turned unresistingly in the cruel grasp. It required but a moment to arrest the act, yet with that strange tenacity which characterizes the drunkard's grasp, it bid defiance to his strongest effort. But he was not a man to stand upon trifles, while the tortured child was shrieking in agony. Fastening upon Ricks' throat, he retained his grasp until the bloated cheek became black, and his hold on the boy's arm relaxed. Moving the boy to the corner, he hastily went out to his cutter for his saddle-bags, thinking, in his excitement, to set the arm before it should be worse swollen. The horse was restless from standing in the cold, and as he stepped into the cutter, the horse started upon a gallop, the reins about his heels, and kept it unbroken until he turned up under the shed of the "Home." In a moment Howard had the reins, and was urging his way again up the hill at full speed. He hastily entered the house, when hell itself could not have presented a view more devilish. The drunkard was standing in the middle of the floor, his red eyes glaring with a demoniac expression, and his teeth clenched like a madman's.

"They'll never worry me again about bread, G—d d——n 'em. I'll learn the cussed brat to break jugs," and more language of the same nature poured from the maniac.

"*They*" would beg for bread no more! They were beyond the "reach of worldly wants or worldly sor-

Digitized by Google

rows. In the brief absence of the Doctor, the drunken man had caught his boy, and as it appeared, had, by repeated blows, dashed his head against the fireplace jams until his skull was crushed into a mass of blood and brains, and flung him across the corpse of the mother. The frame of the child was quivering yet, and the one hand even clutched convulsively at empty air, as he straightened out with a tremulous movement and lay still upon his mother's breast.

The news of the tragedy at Ricks', was speedily spread through the community, embellished with many a horror, until the public feeling ran high against Ricks. The landlord of the "Home" was sure that hanging was too good for him.

While people were talking about the affair, a kind hand had been at its work of love in the house of blood. Mrs. Ricks was found, on again visiting the house, neatly arrayed upon her bed, and her child beside her, her wounds washed and dressed, and the crushed skull of the child hidden in his shroud. It needed iron nerves to look upon such work, and yet a gentle hand had removed the more revolting evidences of the murder, and restored order to the desolate looking room. The hand and foot of the babe had been placed by the mother's side, and the visitor gone. When the citizens came through the blinding storm, they looked with surprise upon the calm features of Mrs. Ricks, pale, but without stain of blood, and the floor and room exhibiting no signs of the tragedy so recently enacted.

Digitized by Google

—Sweet Minnie Hermon! In that chamber of death she kneeled, and with the cold browed and bloody dead her company, prayed that the blood of the innocent might not rest too darkly on a *father's hand.* The bitter storm was unheeded as it swept against her feverish cheek, on her return, for her young heart was full of sorrow. As vivid as the language of fire it burned before her, that to the influence and liquor of the "Home" could be traced the ruin and destruction of the Ricks family.

. . . . . .

The funeral of the Ricks family was one of more than usual solemnity. From the grey-haired grandsire to the innocent babe, rum had swept them away at a blow. A large crowd had gathered, for the triple murder had thrilled through the community far and near. The dead were buried in one grave, its wide and frozen walls silently awaiting to enclose this fresh and fearfully generous tribute to the remorseless scourge let loose in the valley. The snow was falling fast from the thick gloomy clouds, and the bottom of the wide pit was already shrouded with white, all combining to render the scene solemn and cheerless. There was but one relative of the family living, and that was the loved and broken-hearted father. He had been brought from the jail in the custody of officers, and now stood, his head bared to the storms, and his hands in irons. The scalding tears bitterly rained down his ghastly cheeks and upon his fettered hands, and his broad chest heaved with convulsive

Digitized by Google

efforts, which shook him as the blast would shake the reed. He wrung his clenched hands until the blood started from the swollen fingers, and moaned as he stood, a blasted thing in his manhood's prime, the fetter links clanking, but in his soul the iron had gone the deepest. Those who had heard the story of his crime and heaped bitter denunciations upon his head, now looked upon the wretch in his agony, and wept for him. There were mourners at the wintry grave. Minnie was there, crushed with grief; for, in a hundred visits to the drunkard's home on the hill, on errands of mercy, she had learned to love the lovely woman who had suffered so much, and a sister could not have wept more bitterly at a sister's grave. Howard, too, stood a child by her side, and with his handkerchief at his mouth, looked through swimming eyes upon the scene.

As the coffins were placed upon the timbers over the grave, Ricks raised his arms high over his head, and dropped upon his knees, bringing his manacled hands heavily down upon the coffin of his wife, the dead sound from within, and the clash of his irons, mingling dismally with a shriek which chilled with its fierce energy of woe.

"Mary! — O, Mary! My children! How I loved ye! Destroyed by my own hand! Merciful God! here let me die, and be buried with them!"

. . . . . .

The grave was filled by a score of hard hands, and many were the warm tear, that wet them as they toiled.

Digitized by Google

Elder Snyder stepped forward and returned thanks to the people for their kindness, and prayed that God would sanctify to the people this most "*afflicting dispensation of Providence.*"

"*A providence of* RUM, *inflicted by human devils!*"

Turning to see from whence those strange tones, the unknown in the tarpaulin was recognized, leaning upon a head-stone, his red eye fixed upon the speaker. The latter turned quickly away and passed out with the crowd.

Howard lingered a moment, and alone sobbed as he watched the old sexton place the rough boards at the head. His thoughts were busy. He remembered the night of his wedding — the jeweled hand which crowded the wine upon him, and the lovely features which then were the admiration of all. The beautiful and rarely accomplished *Miss Anson* was under the clods before him!

Sick at heart, he, too, turned away, with new thoughts busy in his mind.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XII.

THREE MEETINGS, AND WHAT WAS SAID — A PRAYER ANSWERED.

The events of the last few days furnished fruitful themes for conversation for many a day. The public mind was intensely aroused to the enormity of the triple murder, and nearly all united in unmeasured condemnation of the wickedness of Ricks. Custom in the bar-room of the "Home" was better than usual, for there was a morbid desire to hear and talk over the matter, and the particulars of the affair were detailed for the hundredth time. Men stood with their glasses in trembling hands, and argued wisely upon this or that phase of the transaction.

The faults of Ricks were now as plain as midday! Men who had feasted upon his too generous nature, turned to give him a stab. He was always ugly, especially *when in liquor* — was passionate and quarrelsome. It was a wonder that he had not come to some bad end before.

Howard had been sitting a long time silent with his face buried in his hand, and his feet braced against the fire-place. The remarks of the last speaker aroused him, and turning quickly upon the latter, he broke in:

Digitized by Google

"When was James Ricks an ugly or passionate man? When did he ever wrong any man or woman until carried away by his accursed appetite for liquor? When was he otherwise than high-minded, noble and kind? *Never, unless intoxicated.* I knew him — have known him for years. A truer or kinder friend, a more affectionate or amiable husband, or indulgent father before he took to drink, never lived in this community. You know it. You know, too, whom he married, and what they both were in this community. You know, too, that he had wealth. Men who have fed upon his bounty should not be eager to add to the weight which crushes the stricken criminal. He is guilty of crime, yet as God is my judge, James Ricks, in his right mind, would no more have done what he has, than I would, and but for *rum*, would now be as guiltless. Young Brayton was right. Our tavern will prove a *curse instead of a blessing.*"

Hermon was stung, and retorted from his bar with a sneer, with his hand upon a customer's glass:

"You had better start one of these Temperance Societies, as they call them. Another drink would make you eloquent!"

"*Hermon!*" thundered the Doctor as he strode towards the former and struck his clenched fist upon the bar, with an unusual light in his inflamed eyes, "I shall *never take another drink from your hand!* I've seen enough. But for your liquor, James Ricks would be now at his old home, in the bosom of his family, an honored and respected citizen."

Digitized by Google

"So you mean to charge *me* with the death of his family?" fiercely demanded Hermon.

"I charge it upon the liquor that he obtained at your bar."

"That was his own business, and not mine."

"But, sir, you know that he was beggaring his family, and abusing them shamefully."

"Permit me to say to you, Mr. Howard, that that was no business of mine. It's my business to sell liquor. No body is obliged to buy or drink it unless they choose."

"Very true. But you know he had no control over himself when in liquor."

"I tell you again, that is no affair of mine. I am no man's guardian. Men have a right to drink if they see fit, and I've a right to sell."

"And I've a right to say what I think of the matter. You took a ring from little Henry Ricks which you knew was the wedding ring of his mother, and let him have whisky when *you* knew that Ricks had driven his wife out of doors, and to the neighbors for protection. Was that as you would wish other men to do by your family?"

"I ain't a drunkard, sir," retorted Hermon, with excitement. "I'm not bound to oversee my neighbors' affairs. People had better *mind their own business*," he continued, with meaning emphasis.

"I understand your threat, sir; I've seen enough of your tavern: it has prospered too well for this village. I have seen more suffering and wretchedness

Digitized by Google

and sorrow since you opened this house, than I ever saw before in my life. Ricks' was not the only family to whom I have carried bread and given my practice to save from hunger and death. Light breaks in upon me. I see where it all comes from, and I *shall* attend sufficiently to my "*own business*," Mr. Hermon, hereafter, to let your liquor alone, or else *my* property will go where Ricks' has gone, and *my* family be left to suffer, as I and *yourself*, *sir*, know that his has suffered. As God is my judge, I'll drink *no more forever!* Good morning, sir!"

Had a thunderbolt fallen upon that bar-room floor, the astonishment could not have been greater. The befuddled intellects were too misty to see the plain truths hinted at by Dr. Howard, but they could easily see that he was a very hasty-spoken man, and had acted like a fool. Drink nothing! It was one of the wildest ideas ever thought of, and a temperance man of this day would wonder at the remarks made by those in the bar-room, after Howard left. All concluded that he acted like a madman, and had abused Mr. Hermon most shamefully. There was not the least harm in the world in drinking ardent spirits — it was necessary. Because a man now and then made a fool of himself, so harmless a beverage should not be talked so about. The Doctor was generally a man of intelligence, and it was a wonder what had got into him to make him act so; — he ought to know better. Guess when he got cooled off he would come round right. So Hermon thought, although the

Digitized by Google

words of the Doctor chafed him more than he was willing to acknowledge even to himself. Yet he certainly could not be held responsible for what others did; — each one must look out for himself. If old Ricks had not made a fool of himself, he would not have been where he was. He had never taken any thing from Ricks without he had paid a full price for it. It wasn't his business to dictate how men should spend their property. Such men were his best customers, and if he should refuse to sell them liquor, his business would not be worth anything. He must get a living. He did not want people to make beasts of themselves. If they did, it was their own lookout and not his. He kept a tavern for the public accommodation. To keep a public house and not sell liquor, would be a curious idea! He wan't the fool that Howard took him to be, and that gentleman would find it out so.

With such reasoning, Hermon stifled the little conscience left, and after a few days things assumed their usual course, with slight exceptions. All had miscalculated upon the Doctor. He had at once seen the danger, and in the midst of the horrible effects of the liquor from the "Home," had solemnly sworn to drink no more. His manhood, yet unobliterated by his rapidly increasing appetite for liquor, rebelled against the thought of dying a drunkard. Ricks, his schoolmate, and earliest and best friend, had wasted a fortune, and was now in irons as a murderer. Howard shuddered as he looked over the past few years,

Digitized by Google

and as he swore before God in the bar-room of the "Home," so he would do at all hazards. No influences should drive him from his position.

With bitter words yet upon his tongue and anger in his heart, Hermon passed from the bar-room into the hall. He met Minnie in cloak and hood, with a basket on her arm, just starting to go out among the poor of the neighborhood. In his then ill humor, it was enough to call upon the daughter's head some of the harsh language that swelled in his troubled heart against Howard.

"What new subject of your whimpering kindness now calls you out in the cold? Haven't I told you before to stop this eternal running with provisions after lazy vagabonds? I cannot, will not submit to it longer!" You must stop it!"

"*Father!* I cannot stop it. You must not say that. I am not feeding lazy vagabonds, but the poor and needy, such as the Saviour enjoins upon us to aid. Do not say I shall not, Father!"

"Saviour be—

"O mercy! Speak it not," and she sprung forward and placed her hand quickly upon his burning lips to shut back the dreadful blasphemy. She instantly removed her hand, and bursting into tears fell upon her knees and craved his pardon with burning kisses upon his reluctant hand. The demon was again enthroned in the bosom of Hermon as of old. Maddened with rum and exasperated by his clash with Howard, even the tears of his meek and devoted daughter

Digitized by Google

were like oil upon the fires that raged fiercely within him.

"Min.! no more of this d——d nonsense! I've seen blubbering enough. Your mother was always whimpering around like a simpleton, and I am tired of it. Go into the kitchen and behave yourself. I'll see, Miss, if I can't rule my own house," and with a cruel grasp he seized Minnie by the shoulder and hurled her towards the inner door.

Minnie sprang from his clutch as if stung, but it was not the cruel fingers which reached the quick. Rising erect in all the queenly beauty of her injured feelings, her thin nostrils distended, and her eyes kindling with indignation, she stood before the unnatural parent.

"Father of mine! you may heap reproaches upon me — may even, as you have now done for the first time in your life, lay a harsh hand upon me, — but in the fear of God, never dare again to revile the holy name of one who loved so well and suffered so deeply. Heaven forgive you for assailing the memory of one whom you wronged so cruelly while living. Have you forgotten that she died with the mark of a blow upon her cheek, and a prayer upon her lip for him who gave it? Have you forgotten the promise you gave her then that you would not touch the cup again? By all the memories of the past, of the patient, long-suffering wife — of your own hopes of Heaven, my once noble father, away with this dark demon, and we will be happy again. Else the judg-

Digitized by Google

ments of God will as surely come upon us as he lives above."

Drunk as he was, Hermon felt humbled somewhat, and in a milder tone muttered about giving away so much out of the house; it would "beggar them."

"And would beggary be any worse for us, Father, than others?" mildly asked the daughter.

"Others is nothing to us. It's our business to take care of ourselves."

"But it's our duty to help the needy."

"But we can be reasonable about it; 'taint duty to support all the poor there is."

"Father, I must be plain. There were few poor and needy ten years ago. I shudder when I think of the undoubted cause of their poverty. Would to God that that cause had produced no worse ill than poverty."

"What do you allude to, girl? — what cause?" fiercely demanded Hermon.

"The Traveler's Home! Its liquor has produced suffering and death in every direction."

"Who told you this, you impudent hussy?"

"Have I not seen it in all its forms from the very commencement?"

"And I s'pose you will say next, as Howard did, that I destroyed the Ricks family?"

"*Your liquor did, most assuredly.*"

"But how is that any business of mine? I didn't kill the wife and children."

Digitized by Google

"But the father did, while in liquor, and the liquor came from your hand."

"My hand!" and Hermon involuntarily looked at his hand, as if expecting to see blood there, and then fiercely moved towards Minnie. But she stirred not, and the madman quailed before the daughter, for she had his own spirit, and it was thoroughly aroused.

"Yes, father, it came from your hand."

"But I have a right to sell, and no one is obliged to buy the liquor."

"I know that the law gives you a right to sell, but God says, 'Woe unto him who putteth the bottle to his neighbor's lips, and maketh him drunken.'"

"You needn't preach to me any more, Miss, nor carry any more stuff out of the house," snarled Hermon, as he turned to go out. You carried provisions enough to Ricks' family to have half supported 'em."

"And were they not entitled to even more than a half-support from us?"

"What do you mean? Am I to support all who are fools enough to fool away their property?"

"I mean, father, that the bread I carried to that family was theirs — every morsel, justly theirs — taken piece-meal from them in their poverty."

"But they had their pay for it in liquor," thundered the enraged father.

"In liquor! and you dare to call that pay for all that has been taken from them. Did you not know that every drop which went there was a curse? Could

Digitized by Google

Mrs. Ricks, or her children, eat it when hungry, or wear it in the cold? Didn't it make a fiend of Ricks, and cause him to commit the crime for which he is now in prison? Don't you know this, father?"

"Go to ——! I don't know any such thing. I've got nothing but my own."

"*Who has the deed of their farm?* Dare you say you gave him an equivalent? Is that instrument not the death-warrant of the whole family? No," continued Minnie, as the landlord of the "Home" cowered from her, "that bread was not ours, not a morsel of it. It came unjustly. You may revile — you may turn me from your door, father; but, before God, I will restore, as far as in me lies, to those who have been crushed by this house. You will live to bless me for this, and to curse the day you transformed our then happy home into a tavern. I shall now go on my errand to the Widow Gifford's. Her substance and the life of her only child have been destroyed *by rum*. She needs our aid. It is her due, and she shall have it."

"Hell and furies!" growled Hermon, as he slammed the door behind him. "She, too, has got Howard's stuff by heart, and all the devils this side the pit can't stop her clack."

— The landlord of the "Home" felt himself a martyr, and sought to drown his troubles in a stiff horn of fourth-proof, and a vigorous kicking of the forestick in the fire-place.

Dr. Howard rode home, with new and strange

Digitized by Google

thoughts crowding thickly upon each other. Dimly at first, but increasing as he proceeded, the light of higher views of his duties and responsibilities in the matter of using intoxicating drinks, broke in around him. As light came, so did a knowledge of his own danger, and the nearness of the precipice he had escaped. So intense became his thoughts as he dwelt upon the subject, the abyss opened before him, and he involuntarily drew up his rein so violently that his horse reared, and came near throwing him from the saddle.

"I might have fallen worse — far worse," he muttered, as the fearful vision was dispelled, and he looked out upon the eddying snow and up to the gloomy clouds overhead. It now seemed strange that he had so long forgotten his mother, and the scene in the city garret. A blush crept over his cheek as he recognized the cause of his forgetfulness, and with a holier and more solemn meaning, his recent resolution entered down into his better heart. That cold hand and glaring eye were before him, and the blast assumed a milder wail, as upon that fatal night; and he shut his eyes and spurred on. The light, like a cheering beacon, streamed out from his own window, and he dismounted at the cottage, a free and a happier man. Fearfully plain he now saw the cause of the wasting cheek of the wife, and lingered upon the step to dash a tear from his eye. Not even an angry look or a smothered retort had ever answered his harsh words, or greeted him as he had returned from the revel.

Digitized by Google

The intense and holy love of a better day kindled up with more than its early heat, and he hurried to his wife's chamber.

Howard entered softly, but the chamber was deserted. The fire glowed in the chimney, and the table awaited his coming. As he turned to look, a low murmur came from the half-opened bedroom door, and he recognized the voice of his wife. The current of air from the hall door, which he had opened, swung the other noiselessly upon its hinges, and the whole was revealed. The child had been placed in the bed, and was slumbering sweetly. The mother was kneeling before the bed, the hand of the little sleeper clasped in hers, and her head bowed upon the pillow. Her hair had fallen from its fastenings, and hung in dark masses over the shoulder. Howard had never before found his wife at prayer, and he stood spell-bound, not knowing whether to advance or retreat. Clear and distinct her words came, and like hot brands burned upon his cheek and into his proud soul. And she, too, had seen his danger; and now, with the holy earnestness of a faith which leaned firmly upon God, and a heart swelling with the sorrow which the public eye never beholds, she was praying for her husband, and wrestling with Him who influences the hearts of men, to save the father of her child from a drunkard's grave. Howard started as though an adder had hissed at his feet. And still the long-suffering, never-complaining and devoted wife plead that their home might be spared

Digitized by Google

from the destroyer of those around it. She raised her head again, and prayed more earnestly that He who loved children would guard her own from harm. Tears flooded the channel of words, and she ceased to speak, but — a more touching eloquence — wept her prayers in silence.

"*Ellen?*"

Ere the startled wife could turn, a trembling arm was wound about her, and her hand clasped convulsively in that of her husband, his strong frame heaving with emotion, and the warm tears of stouter manhood's giving away, raining upon the locked hands. The silence was broken only by the sobbing of a man who seldom wept—

"Ellen, how long have you prayed thus?"

"Oh, many, many times, Henry. I hope you are not offended," and she turned to look in his face.

"My deeply injured wife, no! ten thousand times, no! But you will weep no more; your prayers have been answered. I have this night sworn to drink no more forever that which will intoxicate."

Men who know not how much a woman can suffer in the daily crumbling away of her heart's dearest hopes, can dream how unutterable happiness like the sunshine of perfect bliss came back from Heaven on the pathway of her prayers, as she wove her arms around the neck of her husband, and with her head bowed upon his bosom, wept again. Her tears were now for joy. Each one gave back the light of hope and promise, and a sweet and holy calm pervaded her

Digitized by Google

soul in that night of storm. In that hour, too, Howard had determined to lean upon her God, and the tempter was forever driven from their earthly Eden. As he stooped down over his child, it awoke, and a smile answered the kiss. It was like an angel-welcome — welcome back to a better and holier life. The evening meal was never so enjoyed. The fire looked brighter, and the tea-kettle sung a livelier air, and its steam curled up from the spout like an incense. The storm was unheeded; and even after the family had retired, the coals glowed and flashed, and the cricket chirruped his happy song under the hearth.

Dreams visited the sleeping husband and wife. The fearful specter which had seated itself at their hearth was driven away, and the Angel of Hope came and smiled where it had been.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XIII.

MABEL DUNHAM.

Among the earliest victims of the rum traffic in Oakvale, was Harry Dunham, an impetuous, generous-hearted and high-souled young man of thirty years of age. In the pleasures of the cup, the bondage of the tempter was woven so speedily and strongly around him, that his prospects darkened at midday, and the sun of his promise went down like a meteor. His was a nature to yield at once and madly to the fatal embrace of his enemy, and in a few years the gifted young man had fallen to the lowest degradation, and in soiled and tattered garments spent the most of his time in the bar-room of the tavern. The manly form was bloated, the hair bushy and uncombed, and the full, dark eye of a fiery red. It was pitiable to see the once proud young man, holding horses, cleaning stables, sweeping the bar-rooms—performing the most menial service for the pittance of a glass. As a sixpence dropped into his hand, he would turn eagerly away to the bar and spend it for rum.

The course of Dunham had desolated as happy a home as a young man ever had. But the young wife, who had given him the priceless wealth of her young

Digitized by Google

heart, was stricken down like a tender flower, and, without a word of complaining, died.

Mabel, the fair child of the brief union, inherited all her mother's loveliness, and every home in Oakvale was gladly tendered the worse than orphan. She had no more a home, for her father deserted her entirely, and plunged more deeply into dissipation. She no more, however, was compelled to visit the "Home," with the tin pail, and in tremulous tones ask liquor for a drunken father at home.

John Gault, a bold, impulsive boy, a few years older than Mabel, was often seen in her company, and at such times himself went into the bar-room and got the liquor for her. John's father, though a clergyman, was a cold, stone-hearted man, and was angry at the intimacy between his son and "drunken Dunham's" Mabel; but the wilful boy would go to school, and over the fields, and by the river, with the sad-hearted child.

The old school-house stood over the river, perched picturesquely at the "four corners" among the rocks and scraggy pines. The walls upon the lower side were covered with moss, tufts of grass growing in the crevices, and a thistle, with a pale red blossom, reaching out its prickly stem. The house is old and weather-beaten, and the chimney crumbling away; but clustering with a thousand hallowed associations. The jack-knife had been busy upon the clapboards and benches, where rude skill had carved ruder images and names, many of the letters turned the wrong

Digitized by Google

way, and fantastically uncouth. The old door-sill was broken and deeply worn, and the rank grass was growing greenly upon either side of the hard path. There was an old rock by the tuft of elders, sloping back to the hill from its perpendicular front, and smoothly worn by many a summer's treading of bare-footed groups. It was warm — the rock — in the summer's sun, and there were glorious tumbles from the overhanging top.

The rock is there yet, but many of the bare feet have long since trodden the journey of life.

Across the road was a wide-spreading old thorn, with scraggy trunk and lance-like weapons hidden in its leaves; but it bore a gorgeous wealth of white blossoms, and the bees mingled melody with the welcome fragrance. On the knoll beneath, was the mimic carriage-way, with its bridge of bark and embankments of fresh earth. No architects of ancient grandeur were prouder of their achievements than the boy builders. Below the hill was the old mill, with its deep, dark flume, and the pond covered with floating timbers. The mysterious old wheel was covered with moss, and as its dripping arms swung round, a wealth of gems fell glittering in the sunbeams. There was the still water when the old wheel ceased to go round, and the green-looking stones upon the bottom, where the "dace" lay so lazily in the sun, and seemed so wondrous large. It were worth a world to sport again in that cool stream, with the light of childhood in the heart, and its vigor in the limb.

Digitized by Google

The sun crept stilly into the open door of the school-house, and away across the warped boards, nicely swept, and worn smooth by childish feet. Warm and rich was that sunlight as it came in at the window upon the well-worn seat, and leaped off upon the floor across the room. Sweetly it laughed upon the sleeping boy's face and upon his golden hair. The little sleeper was just at school, and the mistress had kindly laid him down, his feet hanging over the end of the bench, and his arm hanging down to the floor.

—The sun moved away—and so will move away the child-dreams of his school days.

There is a low murmur of voices in the room, and the hum of the fly, as he wings about in the stillness, or crawls on the warm window-pane, or trims his shining wings in the sunshine—save this, all is hushed and dreamy. The sun beats hotly without, where the mowers are busy, the scraping of their rifles, as they sharpen their scythes, ringing clearly across the field. With the shadow of the drifting cloud goes by the breeze, after entering the windows like a spirit of health, with its fragrance of new-mown hay.

The wide old hearth is neatly swept, and the fire-place looks cool with its profusion of boughs. The school mistress moves quietly about the room with ferule in hand, and prompting with a musical voice as the children recite.

There is the beautiful and sad face of the lone boy, as, with his crutch beside him, he sits in the door and watches sports he cannot enjoy. His cheeks are

Digitized by Google

pale, but his eye of deepest blue has that resigned and patient look which wins the heart, and his sweet and gentle manner endeared him to all. The best apple is his, and he has a favored seat at all our plays; and when we lift him over the fence, where he can mingle with us under the wide-crowned thorn, his look is grateful, and lingers like a sacred thought in the memory. The pilgrimage of the lame boy is ended. He left his crutch at the grave, and in it that shattered form.

In the corner of the crooked fence, and under the thorn, was the play-house, built of fragments of boards, and walled in with cobble-stones. The broken china was nicely arranged, and the turf floor cleanly swept. But lessons were not always well learned within that little retreat. The plump arm was punished with a pin, when the mischievous owner put dock-burs in her brother's hair.

Mabel Dunham was a favorite, for the children had not yet learned to shun the drunkard's child. Her eyes were sweetly calm and blue, her hair long and lying like waves of gold upon her white neck, or glancing in the sun as her hand tossed the heavy braids from her cheek. A gentle and touching sadness had settled upon her features since her mother's death, and sorrow more than years had written its language upon her thoughtful brow.

John Gault, was the boy-lover of Mabel. He carefully lifted her over the mossy stones in the streams, over the fence, or down from the wide rock

Digitized by Google

by the spring. The yellowest daisy and the freshest wild-rose were hunted out from the meadow and the hedge, and the largest pond-lily was wrenched from its moorings far out in the water. The smoothest and prettiest pebbles were selected from the brooklet's bed for the little house he had built for Mabel, and the greenest moss pulled to carpet the floor. The red maple was climbed for boughs to shut out the sun — those blue eyes ever turned anxiously up that he should not fall. Mornings, John would steal away and watch her coming down the winding path around the hill, and carry her basket to the school. The impetuous boy loved more than boys usually love. He saw her everywhere in night and day dreams. The flame-like foliage of the maple was like the dress she wore. The robin in the beech overhead sang of Mabel. The golden dandelion and the daisy smiled as she smiled; and the blue sky down in the still water, was as dreamy and still as her eyes were calm. He heard her footfall behind him as he hurried through the dusky wood-path. The stars had eyes like hers; and in the moonlight, the dew-drop glittered as he had seen the tear glitter upon her cheek. In the strength and purity of his child-love, John had promised, that, when a man, in spite of his father and everobody else, he would make Mabel his wife, and they would have a home of their own, and be happy.

— Boy dreams!

Mabel Dunham lost!

Digitized by Google

The news spread quickly through the village — for all loved the unfortunate child. The father, deeply intoxicated, had been seen the evening before in her company across the river.

Below the dam was a footwalk, high above the water, for the accommodation of the villagers. Across this was the most direct way to the falls — a place where John and Mabel had spent many hours in childish communion. John was the first to reach the walk, just as the sunshine fell in a broad beam across the pool. There upon the bottom was Dunham and Mabel, one hand clenched upon her arm, and the other upon the handle of his broken jug! The sands glittered in the golden braids of her hair as they lay out upon the clear current; and, as if smiling to the sky, her eye was turned upward. A wild rose was crushed in her stiffened fingers. The father with his jug, and the child with the flower! — both at rest.

There was no little astonishment when it was known that Elder Snyder would not preach at the funeral of Dunham and his child. Few dared, however, to reason the matter with him. His creed was cast-iron in its mould — dark, puritanic and forbidding. He felt that no drunkard could enter Heaven, and believed that the sins of the father were visited upon the children. Dunham was an ungodly man, and Mabel had never been baptized, and it would be blasphemy to pray for those who were already doomed to perdition. Gault indignantly rebuked the bigot because he would not preach for Mabel;

Digitized by Google

but he was severely chastised for his wickedness and impertinence.

On a bright Sunday afternoon they carried Mabel across the stream, and lowered her gently to her rest. John Gault dare not speak, but his heart went down with the coffin, and he loved the old sexton because he dropped the dirt so softly down, and placed the sods so carefully with his hands, with a tear in his own eye. The old man loved Mabel, too.

— Thus early in life ended the love-dream of John Gault.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XIV.

GOING FROM HOME.

"No, I'll not forgive him. He's a wilful boy, and has disobeyed me thrice in this matter. He has shown himself a child of the devil, and he must go out. He is no son of mine, and this is his home no longer!"

"Nay, William," pleaded the tearful wife, "he is our only child. Do not turn him away, but forgive him. He is wayward, but not vicious. Years and kindness will cool his fiery nature, and he will be a blessing in our old age. God will not leave him — we must not. The act may be his ruin, and plant sorrow in our old hearts for life. Our Saviour was forgiving, William," and the earnest woman laid her hand gently on the arm of the stern man before her, "and should we not bear longer with the only one now left us?"

"Tempt me not, woman! Your mother's heart clings wickedly to an unworthy idol. The boy has wandered from the fold and our hearthside and sought intercourse with the ungodly. He is lost, but God's will be done. I must not shrink, for we read that if the eye offend, we must pluck it out. Alfred is determined to inflict disgrace upon us and the church.

Digitized by Google

His mouth is filled with cursings, and his heart with disobedience, and I can harbor him no more."

"But if the prodigal should return," continued the now weeping mother, "you surely would welcome him to our home?"

"Enough of this, Mary; it is wrong to repine. It is ordered that our child should be cast out from among the righteous, and it is ours to submit."

The angel-hearted mother would have still plead for her wayward boy, but she looked in the face of the stern, tearless father, and with a quivering lip turned away to weep as only a mother weeps, and left that frowning man to walk his study with a firm tread and a compressed lip.

Elder Snyder was a Christian of iron mould. No penance-doing monk was ever more exact and rigid in the performance of his religious duties, and more unforgiving towards the wayward and ungodly. He looked upon the least sin with no degree of allowance, and felt it a solemn duty to heap the fiercest condemnation upon all who did not square by his standard of faith. His was a cast-iron creed, unyielding and unforgiving. He was once a persecutor of the saints, but now a minister of the gospel, who dealt only in the fierce red imagery of hell and its torments, in his Sabbath ministrations. He never spoke of the love of the child-like Saviour—nor wept as that Saviour wept—never forgave as that Saviour forgave. He never smiled; but cold, passionless and stern, stood like an angel with a flaming sword to drive out the

Digitized by Google

erring forever; never, like the meek Redeemer, to forgive and pardon on the cross, and welcome to Heaven the praying and penitent thief. He was ever dark and forbidding, and his sermons were ever woven with the sombre texture of eternal wrath. The mild, winning light of our blessed religion never warmed or irradiated his dark nature. He esteemed joy and laughter a sin, and passed among his people with a countenance as rigid and unbending as though no heart throbbed beneath that stolid surface.

Such was the father of Alfred Snyder, for whom the mother plead in the beginning of this chapter. The young looked upon him with awe, but not with love and veneration. There was nothing in his manner or conversation to win the affection of the youth, or to attract them toward him. From the ball-play or the ring he turned away with a frown and a sigh. His prayers were ever of a chilling solemnity, and breathed only denunciations against the impenitent. And in the chamber of the dying, he never wore that smile of hope and faith, which burns like a beacon above the silent wastes of a shoreless ocean. Childhood shrunk away in whispers from that cloudy brow, and hushed the laughter of its joys.

We need not detail the history of an education at such a hearth and by such a teacher. His treatment of his family chilled every warm impulse of his children, and taught them that all earthly joy was a sin. All but one of his children had passed away, but the

Digitized by Google

iron man never wept — it would have been sinful to have wept over the providence of God!

— And so the mother wept alone in her heart and chamber over the wasting of her idols.

Thus Alfred Snyder grew up to early manhood, looking upon his home as a prison-house, and his father as a stern, hard keeper, and upon the world as a bright realm which lured him to pleasures he could not enjoy. Even the most innocent amusements of childhood were denied him. The tide of young life's buoyancy was frowned back to its fountain, where its pent-up strength struggled against the unnatural and unreasonable restraint. The Bible and the catechism were the only books; the rod, the devil, and perdition, the only motives in life. The result of such a system of training upon a fiery nature, need not be told. Alfred inherited all his father's firmness, with the buoyant, sunny nature of the mother. His heart was full of the sunshine of life, and of the nobility of manhood. He turned kindly to every one, and eagerly sought the pleasant associations of youth. He was frank, impulsive, and generous, and from a cold and uncongenial home, turned involuntarily to catch the sunshine he found not at his own hearth-side. Thus, step by step, without dreaming of wrong, he crossed the first circles of youthful pleasure. Instead of striving to make home pleasant, and to blend instruction with amusement, the father was harshly stern and unforgiving. Alfred, now twenty years

Digitized by Google

old, came home from a dance; the father did not expostulate or entreat, but, with a lowering brow, took the rod and chastised his boy. Alfred's cheek flushed a deep crimson, and his eye flashed, but he stood erect and looked his parent in the face. But the strokes burned, and his proud nature writhed under the disgraceful infliction. The punishment came to the ears of his comrades, and, maddened by the fact, Alfred attended another dance, and was again flogged. And still a third time. The gulf had now widely yawned between the parent and child, and the latter sought his chamber with a pale, compressed lip. A new purpose was formed.

The father knelt and put up his evening prayer, his voice as coldly calm and unshaken as though no shadow had ever fallen between him and his first born.

The mother stole away to the chamber of her boy, to drop the balm of kindly words and tears upon his smarting wounds and into the lacerated heart. Alfred had thrown himself upon his bed without undressing, and had already fallen asleep. There were tears lingering upon the lids and cheek, and the holy ones of the mother mingled with them, as she kneeled and wept over the wayward, but brave and noble-hearted boy. His cheeks were flushed, and, upon one of them, was a long line of fiery red, where the lash had reached from the shoulder.

The father prayed not for his child, but the mother did. Alfred awoke to hear her asking the blessing

Digitized by Google

of God upon his head, and he wove his arm around her neck, and wept as a grieved child would weep.

"Mother, I must leave home—it is no place for me. Harsh words I can bear, but not blows. I am disgraced, for the boys all understand the matter."

"No, no, Alfred," answered the mother sadly; "you must not leave. Your father is severe, but he feels that you have disobeyed him. Your mother will plead with him—you are our only child, and you must not go away from us."

"Mother, I must. It's of no use—father never smiles or speaks a kind word to me. Had he done so, I am sure I should not have disobeyed him. I love you, mother, but I cannot love him. Every blow he strikes me smarts to the soul, and, with bitter words, he told me to leave the home I had disgraced. Did he speak to me as you speak, I could get down on my knees to him and beg his forgiveness, but never, with the lash burning on my back. I will go."

Alfred had arisen and stood with erect frame and dilated nostrils, his eye flashing and the whip mark reddening on his cheek. The mother watched him with feelings of pride as he stood, and yet wept at his determination. The mother's tears were yet warm upon the cheek of her boy, to be borne out into the world, and remembered when all else virtuous and holy died out.

"It is of no use," he firmly answered to her earn-

Digitized by Google

est appeals, "I must go. I never shall return until he asks me to, though I will write to you often. And now, mother, I am wild and thoughtless, but you will pray for me when away. I shall be a better man. It is hard to leave — to be turned out, but," and he stood proudly up, "I can wrestle alone in the world, and find none more unkind than him you have told me to love. Don't weep — you unman me. In an hour I shall be on my way."

— Alas! how many stronger wrestlers have been thrown in life's encounters.

The mother spent that swift hour on her knees, and, as the clock struck ten, she hearkened, even then hoping that Alfred would not go. She opened the hall door, passed softly to his chamber, and found the door ajar. She feared he had gone, but she found him bowed and his face wet with tears, and her miniature in his hands. Like the low rustling of an angel's wing, the mother kneeled down, and locked arm in arm in silence, they wept again together, for the mother loved her child.

Alfred stood on the threshold, his heart swelling in his throat, and locked to the heaving bosom of the sorrowing mother. Even then, had that stern father spoken one kind word to the proud boy, the cloud would have passed away from the hearth.

'Twas like wrenching hearts asunder — the agony of that parting. She clung to him with hooks of steel. He had been her idol, and she yielded him as one of the brightest hopes of earth. Clouds had darkened

Digitized by Google

the sky over their heads, but darker ones were in their hearts.

"I must go, mother — may God be with you, for there are none to love you as I love you. Tell father to be more kind to others than he has been to me, and that when old age creeps upon him, one kindly word will bring me back to our home from the ends of the earth. Don't weep, mother, but pray for your wayward boy. *Good-bye!*"

Like a part of her own life, Alfred withdrew from her trembling arms, and turned down the road. She listened to every footstep, the sounds falling like barbs into her desolate heart, and, faint and dizzy, she passed into the dark and lonely chamber, where everything reminded her sadly of him who had gone from her sight forever. It stormed during the night, and she saw in each flash the form of her boy, heavy-hearted and weary, toiling alone through life, without mother or home.

The morning was cloudless, and the sun smiled upon the dripping landscape. The father put up his morning prayer with a steady voice, never once alluding to him who was launched out upon a world-wide and treacherous ocean.

— The mould will long gather upon the grave of that mother, ere the wanderer returns.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XV.

UNMOORED FROM THE HEARTH.

On the fourth day from home, Alfred Snyder found himself in the streets of the Empire City, alone and friendless. The thronging thousands, the rumbling of wheels, and the confusion of tongues, wore the air of novelty for a time. But he soon wearied of all this, and felt himself in a vast solitude, even in the midst of the great Babel. So true it is, that in the very midst of the tramping thousands, the stranger feels like one in a vast solitude, and turns within his own bosom, where there are thoughts of home and friends who are ever joined in one common circle.

It is not our purpose, at this time, to trace the career of Alfred in detail. The chances are against him in the great battle before him. Brave and true men have fallen. There is no true heroism like that which meets and beats back the temptations which, like ten thousand whirlpools, circle and seethe everywhere in the ocean of life.

Alfred was alone, and the principles of virtue and truth not too well fixed. The very manner in which he had been educated at home had robbed such principles of their real attractions. He remem-

Digitized by Google

bered such teachings as associated with the harsh word and the stinging blow. As he turned to the gay world, its gayeties and pleasures had beauties which have too often proved fatal to those of sterner mould. He was impulsive, generous and brave; and under the influences of a right education at home, he would have been one of nature's noblemen.

Alfred remembered his mother, and felt that he should always respect her parting advice. Poor boy! How soon he learned his weakness. By degrees, yet rapidly, he was drawn into the mesh. His was a nature to welcome all that wore the guise of friendship, and the result was that he found himself a dupe and a victim of designing knaves, his good resolutions vanished, and himself floating away resistlessly upon the tide of ruin. Often he thought of his mother, but temptation came again and again, and still closer her bonds were tightened around the boy. He beat the current with feebler stroke, and turned to go down to his fate.

Six months had passed since Mrs. Snyder bid "good bye" to her boy at the old farm gate. Not a waking hour of that time had passed in which she had not thought of him, and lifted her prayer to God to watch over him, and guide his footsteps. As she sat at the morning and evening meal, the eye would flood as it turned to a spot at the board no longer filled. In his chamber she thought and dreamed, and with longings which only a mother can know, looked for his coming at some future day.

Digitized by Google

The mother may dream, but she shall pass from the earth and see him not.

And happy for her that she cannot see him now, as he mingles with the abandoned in the dens of vice. The fair cheek is already red and swollen, and the eye inflamed. How swiftly ruin has written its language on that handsome face and manly frame, and upon his manner and apparel.

The hallowed face of his mother mingles in the dreams of his drunken slumbers, like faint sunbursts struggling into the dank and dark dungeon-house of death. Dim, and still more dim, appeared that form as it receded in the distance, leaving the nightmares of ruin to riot undisturbed in the heart of the victim.

At times, as the fumes of a debauch passed off, his better nature would struggle bravely for a moment, and the yet proud spirit chafe against the fetters which bound him. How eagerly the sick and bruised boy then turned his thoughts homeward, and to his mother, who stood at the old farm gate, as on the night they parted, with outstretched arms to welcome him back! A thousand times, the first impulse had been, to go; but instantly a stern and relentless shadow passed in before him, and with fierce words and thongs, drove him back — the shadow of his father! He could not, would not go back as he was, and he had not strength to burst away and win an honored name among men. There was an enemy in his bosom stronger than he— a sneering devil, who smiled upon the impotent struggles of the enslaved one.

Digitized by Google

Late one night Alfred Snyder was found in the street near the wharf, drunk and asleep.

When he awoke in the morning, he was bewildered and lost. He pressed his hand upon his brow, where sharp pains shot fiercely through every vein. He experienced strange emotions — the bed seeming to rise and fall as if tossed on an ocean swell. He attributed the sensation to his debauch, but he heard the creak of cordage above him, and a sound like the dashing of waves near his head. A dim light struggled in through a small window above his bed, and he arose and attempted to stand upon his feet. The room rocked, and he believed himself yet drunk, though he could remember distinctly the scenes of the previous evening. He groped around to find a door, but reeled and stumbled against his bed. That sound of dashing waves still continued, and he shut his eyes to determine whether he was not still dreaming. At last he managed to climb up to the window by standing on the bed, and look out. It could not be a dream! yet, there met his bewildered gaze one wide expanse of blue water, the long, unbroken swells plunging sullenly towards a faint blue cloud in the distant horizon. He was on board a vessel, and the wide waters rolling between him and the shore!

Drunk and insensible, Alfred had been borne to the ship which was outward bound for a three-years cruise. As the sun went down that day, he leaned over the bulwarks of the vessel and looked out on the bright pathway of gold, which mockingly smiled

Digitized by Google

away towards the distant home. Again he thought of that Eden and its mother, and a hot tear leaped from his feverish cheek, and was borne shoreward by the receding wave.

We shall make too much of a digression if we trace all the wanderings of Alfred Snyder. He was wrecked on the Barbary coast, and for three years was a slave to the Moor. He escaped from his bondage but to be wrecked again on the western shore of Africa, and struggle for weeks with fever and deprivation. He was at last taken up by a slaver, and afterwards taken by pirates, and entered as one of their number in their bloody trade.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XVI.

THE STRANGER IN THE TARPAULIN.

It was one of the days of late autumn. The morning was cold and cloudy, and the ocean swells came plunging darkly to the shore. A chill wind blew out in gusts, sweeping the water from rising billows, and bearing it along in drifting clouds of spray. The streets were damp from the night before, and all things wore a dismal and cheerless aspect.

Towards noon the heavy fogs rolled out from the shore, and the sun struggled feebly through the broken clouds. Far out, with all sails set, a vessel was beating towards the harbor. But not until late in the afternoon did she drop her anchor at the wharf and furl her damp sails.

With a glass, one might have stood on the wharf and noticed a person on the deck of that ship, as motionless as a block, leaning over the bulwarks, his chin resting on his hand. The sailors were busy aboard, but he moved not, until the anchor dropped and the vessel rocked like a weary and panting monster at the wharf. He then started like a man from a deep slumber, and paced the deck with a quick and impatient tread.

A week or ten days from the time above alluded

Digitized by Google

to, a man might have been seen toiling up the long hill which led to the village of Oakvale, with a slow and weary step. His sailor garb was hard-worn and dusty. His feet were blistered from travel, and he carried his shoes in his hand, stopping frequently to rest by the way-side. His face bronzed and weather-beaten, and marked with scars, and grossly red, his eye red and fierce, and his hair long and matted. The frame was a noble one in its proportions, but the step had none of the vigor of mature manhood. Slowly and silently he pursued his way, nor noticed the passer-by who turned to look again at the dust-covered and uncouth-looking stranger.

As he reached the top of the hill overlooking the village, he turned from the beaten path, and seated himself upon the stones which had tumbled from the old wall, and with his arms resting upon his knees, gazed long and earnestly towards the village. The sun was setting without a cloud, and its beams rested in all their autumnal loveliness upon the landscape. Peacefully it went down behind the western hills, and still the traveler gazed, until the mingled hum of the evening sounds came up the valley. The moon was already in the sky, and the soft twilight; and clear and distinct the church bell pealed out and swelled up, and then rolled away like waves upon the trembling air. That iron voice startled the traveler, and a thousand thoughts might have been seen creeping over his swollen features. Again he listened, and as the last notes died out in a murmur, he bowed his

Digitized by Google

head and wept. Like the showering rain, the pent-up drops glanced from the feverish cheek.

The prodigal stood again in the outskirts of his native village: the scarred and weather-beaten sailor was Alfred Snyder. He had returned, and there he stood on the bridge and looked down upon the shimmering waters of the stream. He lived again in the past, and stood there as when a boy. But what a shadow had passed over the years of his manhood.

Alfred entered the village. Many of the buildings remained as when he left, and he walked up the familiar street like one in a dream. How strangely the memories of other years stole back in their early freshness, until it seemed but a day that he left it all and the dwellings and the stream, the bridge overgrown with grass, and the mellow moonlight, the clump of hemlocks below, and the weather-beaten school-house across the pond, were the same as then. It was a happy, an ecstatic dream; and as he thought of how much he would give were it in his power to buy back the past, and blot out his manhood's years and their dark history, he wept again.

Here was the old church, the grass green around its old steps, and the tin dome glimmering in the moonbeams. Alfred passed round to the window by the shed, and climbing upon the old bench, peered in through the window. What thrilling thoughts throbbed in his bosom as he attempted to scan familiar places in the dim light. The moonbeams fell upon the old desk where his father had preached from his

Digitized by Google

infancy, and across into the family pew. Did he preach there now, and his mother sit in that old pew? The outlines of the organ were shadowy. Where was she who once sat at the keys?

The prodigal turned away from the holy silence which reigned within the church, and passed into the heart of the village. The same tavern sign swung between the posts, and the same "stoop" was there. He passed quickly on, for it seemed sacrilege to invade the better thoughts which now possessed him with the bitter memories of the tavern house. A few steps, and he stood where he parted from his mother. He trod softly, for it was holy ground to him, and involuntarily looked to see his mother, as she then stood at the gate and wept her good-bye. Steadily the tear drops ran down his cheeks, and he leaned over the gate, yielding himself to the thoughts which bore him away like a flood. There stood the old parsonage — the home of his youth; and he lingered, and looked through streaming eyes, like a returning wanderer into a holy Eden. The old cherry was there still, its yellow leaves now rustling in the path and upon the green by the roadside. The little porch had not changed, and the wild vines clung to the eaves as of yore. His own chamber window was there, and the low roof beneath it. He longed to go in and look into the garden, but dared not touch the brass knocker upon the front door. He felt that he would have given worlds to have known if his mother was there, yet dreaded to know. He listened for her

Digitized by Google

footstep as he once used to hear it, when she watched late for his return, but it was the rustling of the leaves which had fallen in the walk. Was the mother there, or had she passed away, and strangers taken her place? The moon came brightly out of the clouds, and he passed up to look upon the old lion-faced knocker. As his foot fell upon the sill, the dark shadow of a cloud passed over the sky, and he shrunk timidly back to the gate. But he felt that he must know, and he again stood within the little porch and peered into the face of the bronzed lion for the familiar name His heart sank within him, for another name was there, and the stern image seemed to frown upon him, and he turned away, as weak as a child.

Without a thought, he had turned up the street, and stood in front of the old church-yard, its sable gate standing dark and sombre at the entrance. Guilty as Alfred was, and his hand red with crime, the flowing tears, and the sacred memories which brought them, made him forget his own degradation, and he sought the grave-yard as a place of rest. He had not yet thought that his mother might be there until he stood among the sodded mounds; and when the thought came upon him, he gasped for breath, and leaned heavily against the fence. That mother had been a beacon which had guided him in his wanderings towards home, and he felt that if it had gone down in the grave, there was no hope for him. The bruised prodigal felt that she could save him, and

Digitized by Google

he shuddered as he cast his eye upon the white marble that stood in the moonlight.

Alfred knew where his brothers and sisters were buried, and, as if dreading some fearful revelation, he passed on among the graves. How loud the sear leaves in the hollows rustled in the stillness of the night. Weak, trembling, and dizzy, he reached the iron paling, and for a moment shut his eyes in dread. The cold drops stood out upon his brow, and yet his cheek burned hotly. He lifted his tarpaulin from his head, and as the cool night wind stirred his shaggy locks, he felt strengthened. And there, in that enclosure, stood a large marble slab. With the weakness of a child, he reached out and clung convulsively to the monument, and read, as he dropped his hat upon the grave, "Sacred to the memory of MARY SNYDER, who died May 10th, 18—, aged 56."

His mother was dead, and the grass of four summers had been green on her grave. That beacon to which he clung for salvation, had gone down in the night of death, and he was alone! Her arms were not spread to receive him, or her tears of welcome to fall upon his neck. Hope died away in the prodigal's heart, the graves swam around him, and he fell heavily upon the leaf-covered mound, his scalding drops pouring out the love of years, and mingling with the dew which trembled like gems upon the rank blades.

—The fallen one would have been happy could he have lain his head by the side of his mother's upon its pillow of earth, and with her been at rest.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XVII.

THE TRIAL.

As the time approached for the trial of Ricks, the circumstances of his crime were again brought to the public attention with an interest equal to their first development. His conviction and execution were looked upon as a matter of course.

Time had laid a heavy hand upon the murderer during his imprisonment, and the days had been dark and dreary. There were none of kin to befriend him in this great trouble, and there were few in the community who ever gave a thought to the prisoner in his cell. Elder Snyder had never yet seen Ricks since his confinement, but had contented himself with thundering wrath upon his head from the pulpit.

But there was one who visited him often. The penitent and humble criminal had learned to listen to her footfall as that of an angel of peace. To her he was indebted for many a comfort, and many a word of kindness and consolation. Hers was the only countenance which had smiled upon him in his solitude. Her woman's heart had sympathized with his, and her tears had mingled with his tears, while, with the calm and cheering faith of the Christian, she pointed him to one who could save to the uttermost.

Digitized by Google

There was a sublimity in the scene — the red-handed murderer bowing and weeping like a child, as the gentle friend plead in her sweet low voice for one so deeply guilty. When those who had shared the prisoner's too generous bounty left him to his fate without a word of commiseration, the daughter of the man who had brought the ruin upon him clung to him like a sister. As Ricks thought of all she had done for him, he forgot much of his bitterness against the father.

So strong was the current against Ricks, that none of the lawyers would defend him. The ruined man had no money or wealthy friends with which to command aid. On the day before the trial, the one at first retained avowed his determination to abandon the case.

"You are a sensible man," responded Hermon from his bar, "his case is hopeless. A man would gain no credit or money in such a case. He must swing."

"And he ought to, if ever a man did," continued several in the bar-room.

"*There are those who deserve the rope more!*" hissed the man in the tarpaulin.

"That may be," retorted Hermon, looking meaningly into the face of the speaker.

"*And will hang yet!*" deliberately added the stranger, rising to confront Hermon, that wild eye kindling with unwonted glitter, as it gazed into that of the shrinking landlord. The latter turned away as from a reptile's spring, for there was something

Digitized by Google

about the sailor which always repelled too much license.

"And why, may I ask," said Doctor Howard, who had listened to the conversation, "should not Ricks be defended?"

"He owns up, and what's the use?" answered Hermon, glad to get rid of the sailor.

"But the worst men are entitled to counsel. Our laws guarantee it."

"But he has nothing to pay. Can't expect people to defend a gone case for nothing."

"Perhaps," coolly remarked the Doctor, "some of his *friends* will aid him with means, eh?"

"What do you mean, sir, by '*friends?*'" angrily demanded Hermon.

"*Those who have his money in their pockets*," replied Howard, looking the landlord calmly in the eye.

"What do you mean by that?—that *I* have got any of his money?"

"I meant what I said," continued the Doctor, with coolness, in spite of the angry advance and menace of Hermon. "Ricks once had enough to employ able and *honorable* counsel, and command the respect of those who like cowards heap their venom upon his name." The shot told, and there was a brief silence in the room. Coloring deeply, the lawyer turned from the bar where he had just swallowed a dram, and inquired of Howard if he meant to "insinuate anything by the word honorable."

Digitized by Google

"Yes, sir; and to make the matter understood, I now say that no honorable man would desert a client because his cause is bad and his purse empty. I trust there is no insinuation about that!"

"Do you mean to say, sir, ——

"Just what I did, Mr. Skillott," broke in the Doctor, as he saw the former move towards him with clenched fists. "Men who *win* money so easy, should not desert a client with an empty purse!"

"But," said Skillott, in a more softened tone, "the man is a bad man. He acknowledges himself guilty of a brutal murder, and declares his determination to plead *guilty*. What is the use of a defence?"

"Every man, sir, is entitled to a defence. Ricks, at heart, is no more a murderer than you or I."

"How can you make that out?"

"The process is simple. He was maddened with liquor. When sober, he loved his family and was kind."

"Nobody was to blame for his drinking but himself, I am sure. It was his own business."

"The man who sold to him was *more to blame*. He knew the appetite of Ricks, and how he treated his family when in liquor, and in rigid justice is as much *guilty of the crime as Ricks*."

"*You're a —— rascal!*" belched Hermon, springing for the poker, and brandishing it over Howard's head. There was a crimson flush upon the cheek of the latter, but it passed away, and he eyed his infuriated enemy with a steady nerve.

Digitized by Google

"Keep cool, Mr. Hermon; you 'll find it a more troublesome matter to attack a sober man than to put a drunken one into the street."

"*You* deserve to be kicked into the street. A murderer, indeed!" muttered the landlord of the "Home," as he trembled with rage.

"Mr. Hermon, there are ways of committing murder without coming within reach of human laws. But God's laws are plain. You could not sell arsenic to a man who you knew would use it for self-destruction. You cannot dig a pit that a neighbor may fall therein, or let an unruly ox run at large."

"But, sir, how did *I* ever touch Ricks' family?"

"Touched them with the most cruel torture. You *knew* that every sixpence Ricks brought you was needed by his family, and yet you took it *to the last one*, and sent there that which you knew was destroying them by inches. You laid the train to their door, liable at any moment to produce just such results as we have witnessed. But for this tavern, Ricks would now be an innocent, a wealthy and an honorable man. If, as in olden time, the blood of the murdered should be traced to the nearest threshold, your own would be crimsoned with the blood of the Ricks family."

"False as h—ll!" thundered Hermon. "I have a license to sell, you abusive scoundrel, and am not accountable for other men's doings. I tend to my own business, and I wish others would mind theirs."

"Be sure you take your license to your grave and

Digitized by Google

to God; and may you find that and your own hand guiltless of others' blood! Good morning, Mr. Hermon," bowed Howard, slowly turning upon his heel and going out.

"Please remember, gentlemen, what that man said. I'll sweeten him for slander, or my name ain't Hermon," hissed the exasperated landlord, as he turned into his bar.

"We (hic) — we will, and more too," stuttered a poor sot, reeling on the "bunk" in the corner.

"Yes, for the murderers are not all hung yet," added the sailor, as he sat with his chin in his palms.

"Take that, you devil!" shouted the gored landlord, bringing the poker, still in his hand, down fiercely over the speaker.

With the spring of a cat, the latter writhed from the blow, and fastened upon the throat of his assailant.

"Playing poker, eh? Think to train Tarpaulin because he's crazy, eh? Not so easy killing sober men! Stick to your bottles, and let iron alone, and murder in safety — ha, ha, ha!" That half-maniac laugh fairly burned upon Hermon's cheek, so near was the face of the sailor, as he glanced with a fiendish glee upon him. That iron grip would have proved fatal in a moment more, for his eyes rolled back in his head, and his tongue, black and swollen, protruded from his mouth.

"Stick to your bottles, Mr. Hermon; there is more blood to shed, and men to hang!" hissed the sailor, as he released Hermon, and again emitted that pecu-

Digitized by Google

liar chuckle. When Hermon recovered his voice, the sailor had gone.

Walter Brayton had just completed the study of the law, and returned to Oakvale on the evening preceding the trial of Ricks. His generous and noble nature was indignant, when he learned that his counsel had deserted him just on the eve of his trial. Walter's resolution was taken, and he immediately took his way to the jail, though late in the evening, for the purpose of offering his services in the case.

It was with the utmost difficulty that Walter obtained admittance to the prison. Had not the jailer been a personal friend, the doors would have been closed against him; for the sheriff, Landlord Hermon, had that day strictly forbidden such privileges to the prisoner. "I have already violated the injunction," said the kind-hearted man, as he put the key in the lock.

As they entered the passage leading to the cell a female figure, deeply muffled, stood at the grated door awaiting the coming of the jailer. As the ponderous engine swung grating back, the figure, drawing the hood still more closely over her features, passed lightly and swiftly out.

"That," said the jailer, "is the only person, Lawyer Skillott excepted, who has ever visited Ricks since his confinement."

"I was not aware," said Brayton, "that the unfortunate man had any kindred left. Who can she be?" he continued, in a tone of surprise.

Digitized by Google

"I am not at liberty to tell her name, even to *you;* but she is one of the angels of earth, and never fails, in any weather, to visit the prisoner. A thousand comforts, sir, and what is more, kind and forgiving words, have come from her. I have been blamed for it all, but she comes and goes in the night, and I could not help it. Her voice would open the doors themselves, it seems to me, it is so soft and kind, and her face is so sad. Poor girl, she is seeing sorrow," and the kind-hearted man brushed away a tear with his sleeve.

Brayton found Ricks bowed over his Bible and in tears, but the latter welcomed his young visitor with a smile. To Walter's proposition, however, he maintained a determined opposition for a long time.

"But," said Walter, earnestly, laying his hand upon the prisoner's arm, "you are not entirely indifferent to the opinion of the world. You are looked upon as one of the most cold-blooded of ——

"*Murderers*, you would say," broke in Ricks, with a shudder, as Walter hesitated.

"But," continued the latter, "you are not. You were maddened with rum. You loved your wife and children as well as any man. By these memories, and for your own name, it is your duty as well as a privilege to make a defence. To be sure, the case is a dark one, but we can hope for the best."

"*Hope!*" echoed Ricks, in a hollow voice, "I hope for nothing but the rest of the grave;—I dare not hope for Heaven. And yet, Walter, as I am a dying

Digitized by Google

man, I am *not* a cold-blooded murderer," and the cheek blushed redly at his own words. "I *did* love Mary and my children. God! what a horrible dream," he muttered, as he bowed his face in the open book before him, until the pages were wet with hot tears.

"But I have not a farthing in the world," said Ricks, looking up.

"Don't speak of money," quickly replied Brayton. "I am young, and have no experience, but it will afford me a happiness you will not deny me, I am sure, to allow me to aid you what I can."

"Well, let it be as you wish, but it will be of no use. Yet I shall owe you much for your kindness, for the friends who have remembered me in my misfortune are few. But one *friend*, besides yourself and the jailer, sir, has ever been within these walls. May God bless her for what she has done for me. Her father, though he has ruined me, has even ordered that a friend should not see me."

"Her father! And she whom we met was ——

"*Minnie Hermon*," added Ricks. "Her kindness alone has made life bearable. Would that I had *her* faith in the Redeemer!"

—Walter went out with a holier love for the rum-seller's daughter.

The streets of Oakvale were thronged early on the day of the trial. By the time the court opened, the

Digitized by Google

court-room was packed by the people of the village and the surrounding country, the dense mass swaying in excitement as the prisoner was brought in and placed at the bar. Revengeful feelings gave way in many a heart to the nobler one of sympathy and pity, as those who had known Ricks once, looked upon him now. He had come forth from his cell with his hair of a snowy white, and the form and bearing of an old man. In the darkness of his imprisonment, the bronze had faded from his cheek and brow, and they were now of an ashy paleness. There was a slight flush on his features, as he looked round upon the multitude. As he seated himself, his eye fell upon a pitcher of flowers standing before him, made up of the choicest of the season, and tastefully arranged. The prisoner well knew what hand placed them there, and the thought of her, with the perfume of the flowers, stole like a cooling shadow upon his burning cheek.

"Who is your counsel?" asked the judge of the prisoner, as it was well known that Skillott had refused to have anything more to do with the defence. Ricks looked around, and a shadow passed across his features, as he felt that young Brayton, too, had been overawed by the strong sentiment against him. At that moment the stalwart form of Walter Brayton was seen crowding up the opening in front of the bar. Slightly pale, but apparently calm, the boy advocate took his seat by the prisoner, and to the usual question firmly answered "*not guilty!*"

Digitized by Google

The outside interest increased at the prospect of a struggle, but the cause of the defence seemed so utterly hopeless, that the better portion of the audience turned with pity from the prisoner and his counsel, and all wondered at Brayton's temerity in undertaking the case against such odds. Skillott, now engaged on the prosecution, smiled with ill-concealed contempt, not unmingled with delight, as he counted upon an easy triumph. Walter's eye fell upon the bouquet before him. To his better-informed mind, it read a language which nerved every purpose within him: "*Hope, faith, courage, deliverance!*" Walter at once knew that the messenger spoke to the prisoner, and felt a thrill as he recognized the hand of the author. But what could it mean? As he raised his eyes he saw the sailor gazing upon him with a meaning but mysterious look.

We need not follow the trial of Ricks through in detail. The proof was conclusive, and left not a loophole for the prisoner to hang a hope upon.

All eyes were turned upon the prisoner's counsel as he arose to address the jury, and Brayton himself felt a crushing weight upon him. There was a tremor in his voice, and the brief shook slightly in his hand. An insulting sneer rested upon the face of Skillott, as he leaned back in his chair, and with his thumbs in his vest looked Brayton full in the face.

Brayton was evidently embarrassed, and blundered in his opening. To a remark that he was inexperienced, Skillott retorted in a whispered insult, but

Digitized by Google

distinctly heard by Brayton and the bar. The half-suppressed titter stung the young man, but he was calm — fearfully cool and calm. The crowd were taken by surprise at the matter and manner of the young advocate. To a voice of unusual depth and power, and a mien noble and commanding, he added a rich imagination, a mind well stored with reading, and a logic relentlessly close and convincing. Turning his kindling eye upon Skillott, he deliberately stated the cause of his treachery to the prisoner, with comments so withering, that the smile passed quickly from the face of that veteran advocate, and he looked more like a guilty one than the prisoner. The bold and successful castigation of one so dreaded in the courts, produced a sensation in the room, and people essayed more eagerly to catch the tones of the speaker. But as he warmed and forgot himself, they swelled and rolled until distinctly heard by the vast throng assembled without. The oldest in the profession were taken by surprise. Brayton's argument exhibited so perfect a knowledge of all the intricacies of the law; so wide and thorough an acquaintance with authorities; so complete a mastery of every avenue to the human heart, — skill in attacking and defending, and exhaustless power of illustration, — that old counselors were spell-bound as he proceeded.

After going through with the testimony, he concluded:

"Gentlemen, I know not what the result of your verdict may be. But beware how human prejudices in

Digitized by Google

fluence your decision this day. The unfortunate man whose life is at stake, may be guilty of wrong; but it is not the part of men — of Christians, to pursue an erring brother vindictively into the very presence of a final Judge. I have been pained at the unfeeling and unforgiving character of the public mind in relation to the alleged crime of the prisoner at the bar. He was in prison and you visited him not. The meek and holy Master, who wept over sin and spoke kindly to the guilty, has found no representative in your midst, save one, to extend the most common human sympathy to the lone one in his cell.

"Gentlemen, you are all the creatures of circumstances — of education. The ordeal that tries men, brings out their true character. Who among us shall dare to say that no temptation could shake him from his position? Man does not know himself. The strongest of to-day, tried by adversity to-morrow, may fail — the best may err.

"Look at — Ricks, gentlemen! Until his ruin by a vice now too lamentably prevalent, and the acts now alleged against him, was he not the peer of the proudest in this community? Who of you ever heard ought against him or his? His honor was untarnished by an unworthy word or deed, his generosity almost a fault, and his worth, as a man and a citizen, equal to any. What wrought his ruin? *The foul and festering hell of corruption*, whose fumes even now come up into the precincts of the very temple of justice. Your tavern ruined him.. But for that, a

Digitized by Google

good citizen would stand blameless among you to-day, and a husband and father dwell in peace in the bosom of a happy wife and children. And are there none to blame for all this ruin? Before God, I believe the people of this community as guilty of the destruction of the Ricks family, as the prisoner at the bar. To be sure, they did not strike the blow. But their agents, the members of the excise board, signed their death warrant; and while at their *homes and their prayers*, the devilish work was carried out. The victim was first bound in the chains of an appetite, which has ruined the strongest intellects ever created, his substance taken from him, and his brain maddened with poison. Under the direct influence of liquor, then and *now* sold by law in this community, he committed the deed charged upon him. Who placed that temptation in his way? Are none but him guilty of the fatal results? The rum which caused the deed, went from your tavern. As I once dared to say, it *has* proved a curse indeed. You have, Prometheus like, chained down the victim, and then let loose vultures to tear him. There are accessories to this triple murder, who are not punished by law. The people and their agents are *particeps criminis*. They have aided and abetted the sweeping tragedy. There is broad trail of blood from the ruined altar of the Ricks family to your own, and the threshold of your tavern. The unoffending wife and innocent children died legally — died by authority of the people of Oakvale — died a revolting and cruel death,

Digitized by Google

under a warrant, with your names, through your delegated instruments, attached in full to the parchment of blood!

"Gentlemen, this prisoner is not the only one who is to enter this room in custody. Pauperism and crime are being manufactured in our midst at a fearful pace. A fearful change has come over our once peaceful and happy village. Our families have been ruined, and our fields turned to waste. Pauperism stalks your streets in its rags. Blood! — innocent blood, smokes hotly from the licensed butchery of the rum demon. There is a note of sorrow, and a maniac wail upon the ear. Mabel Dunham and her imbruted father — Hinson in your jail, with the flesh bitten from his arms, and his body drenched in blood — an esteemed citizen frozen within sight of his own door — the Watt family at *this hour* weeping around the corpse of a broken-hearted mother — Ricks the elder, of revolutionary memory, with the snows of winter in his thin locks, and the frost in his eye—a once happy family, at rest in a bloody grave — families once wealthy and respectable, now living as *town paupers* — scores now doomed to the same fate, and desolation and wo scattering broadcast among all classes,— all point to your liquor business as the source of all! Blood cries from the ground, and fresh tragedies will startle, when too late, a guilty community from its deathly slumbers.

"But I will not detain you longer. I leave the fate of the prisoner with you and with God. There

Digitized by Google

are few to weep in the event of a conviction, for he has no kindred on earth. The last of a noble family is before you, charged with a capital crime. Those whom he loved, as you love those dear to you, are in their graves. Whatever may be the result, may this community bear in mind the period when the prisoner at the bar was all that a parent, husband, and citizen should be, and as you go to your homes this night, ask yourselves the question — what caused the fall of one so high in your estimation?"

There were few dry eyes in the audience during portions of the plea for the prisoner. The judge's lip even quivered with emotion. In the minds of some, new light had dawned in relation to the liquor business, while others ground their teeth, and watched the bold advocate with lowering brows.

Skillott's plea was labored and bitter — aimed more at Brayton and his "dastardly slanders" upon a respectable community and profession. He evidently writhed under the reflection that he had met with an antagonist more than his match.

The charge was feeling but plain, and after a brief deliberation, the jury returned a verdict of "guilty." On being asked if he had anything to say, Ricks arose and said:

"I have but a word to say. I wish to look you, gentlemen, in the face, and every neighbor in this room, and before God, declare that I am not a deliberate, willful murderer. I loved my wife and children when I let rum alone. To that alone I owe my

Digitized by Google

ruin and my crime. I do not fear to die, — there is no tie which binds me to earth. If my poor life would restore my wife and her children — my own good name, and our unblighted home, I should die happy. May all beware of the cause of my fall."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XVIII

THE GALLOWS CHEATED OF A PREY — THE PEOPLE OF A SIGHT.

LATE in the night previous to the day appointed for the execution of Ricks, Minnie Hermon was passing from the jail to the "Home." For the last time she had stole to the cell of Ricks, to administer a kind word, and to ask forgiveness for her father.

As she passed out into the yard, and between the jail and the court-house, she was confronted by a tall form standing immovably in her path. She was startled, but did not cry out, as many would have done, at so abrupt a meeting in the dark. The intruder manifested no disposition to stir from the passage, and remained silent. Minnie mustered firmness to demand the cause of the interruption, and who it was who thus intruded himself upon a defenceless woman.

"A friend. You know 'Crazy Alf.' You gave him bread, and treated him kindly."

"If you are a friend, let me pass, and you shall never want when you ask bread again. Do not detain me here."

"Miss Hermon is a friend of the prisoner?" whispered Alf, not stirring from his tracks.

"I am, and hope you are," replied Minnie, now

Digitized by Google

thoroughly alarmed, fearing that her movements had been watched for no good purpose.

"*I am* — must not be hung — horrible!"

"What can you mean?"

"Hist! Speak lower. Ricks not a bad man — never do wrong again — *must not hang!*"

"I do not understand you. He is to be hung to-morrow," and Minnie shuddered at the word.

"*Must not hang*, I tell you. Murderers not all hung yet — *give him wings!*"

"How? — what?"

"You do not want him hung — do no good — bring no dead back. Must let him go!"

"How can that be? Would it be right?" asked the eager girl.

"Right to cheat the gallows? — to cheat rum? — to let a penitent go to do better?" No more a murderer than *I am!*"

Minnie startled at the firm energy of that "I am." It was ground between the teeth with a shudder.

"What can be done?" she timidly asked.

"Take this to the prisoner — *you* can do it," and he drew something from his sleeve and held it towards Minnie. She involuntarily reached out and clasped some hard substance wrapped in a paper.

"God forbid! You would not have him commit —

"No, no. But he has iron to gnaw before he can fly."

Minnie was easily convinced that the ends of justice would be just as well answered in the escape of

Digitized by Google

Ricks, as in his execution; for her woman's heart shrank from the latter alternative, and she turned back toward the jail.

The bar-room was full on the evening preceding the day of execution, and the event of the morrow was earnestly discussed. Hermon was mellow, and spoke with brutal levity of his duties as sheriff at the scaffold. Rum flowed freely, and the probable bearing of the condemned was canvassed over jingling glasses.

Unnoticed by the intoxicated group, "Crazy Alf" had stolen into the room, and seated himself in the corner, behind the stove, his eye wearing an unusual glitter as he watched their movements. In reaching for wood, Hermon stumbled over the strange creature, and recoiled at the touch.

"Many a worse fall, yet, Sheriff Hermon! — ha! ha!" hissed Alf, rising to his full height.

"Come, come, Alf, none of your vinegar. Let's be friends, and take something."

"Guess I will — we must know each other better, eh?" and Alf followed Hermon to the bar. None saw the former turn his brandy down the outside of his throat, into his bosom, but rather made themselves merry over the apparent effects of the liquor upon the half-crazed sailor. Alf craved more, and drank again and again with Hermon, the latter glad to thus win the good will of a troublesome customer. The sailor was forward to display his money, and all drank at his expense.

Hermon was soon reeling, and in passing out of the

Digitized by Google

bar to assist a traveler, he lost his balance, and fell headlong.

"Worse falls than that, yet," came from Alf in that peculiar, bitter tone, as Hermon arose to his feet by the aid of a chair and the arm of the traveler. When the landlord of the Home again looked for the sailor, that personage had gone, and none had witnessed his stealthy exit.

"All drunk and Alf sober. Now for it, while rum and darkness lasts," said he as he swiftly glided down the street. Creeping under a long tier of sheds, after listening a moment in the court-house grounds, he drew forth a long, light ladder, and carried it across the garden, and to the rear of the jail. All was dark and still, the rain now steadily falling, and the wind beating in gusts as Alf proceeded to carefully raise his ladder and rest the top against the top of the grated window of the cell where Ricks was confined. At this juncture, the jealous dog noticed the movement, and came growling from the woodshed. Alf was a familiar character about the premises, and he called the dog to him.

"Hate to do it, but men worth more than dogs," he muttered, throttling the unsuspecting mastiff, and cutting his throat from ear to ear. When the dog became still in his hands, he dropped him and cautiously ascended the ladder.

Portions of the iron window had been cut and left to be easily removed, by Alf, some days before, and it was but a moment's work to lift out the bars and

Digitized by Google

silently tie them to the ladder so as to avoid noise. Lifting the window by hair's breadths, he leaned in and listened for a long time. He had feared that the officers would watch with the prisoner during the night; but Hermon was drunk, and the jailer absent by a cunning ruse. Alf could hear but one person breathing in the cell, and he ventured to whisper the name of the prisoner.

"Who calls?" slowly answered the latter, doubting the evidence of his hearing, and rousing from his cot.

"A friend."

"And why here?"

"*To save.* Do no good to *hang!*"

Ricks shuddered. The word entered his soul like the chill of death, and crept through every vein, as the scaffold and the crowd loomed distinctly out in the darkness of his cell. *To hang!* He closed his eyes to shut out the horrible phantom, but it was still there — his neighbors staring at the solemn spectacle, and the victim, wearing his own features, ghastly and swollen, looking down from the scaffold in his shroud of white.

"James Ricks! are you *ready?*" impatiently demanded Alf, leaning still farther into the cell.

"Ready for what?" muttered the former, confused and hardly knowing whether he was awake or asleep.

"Ready to *leave.* Do no good to *hang*, tell ye. Go off and be a better man."

"I begin to understand you. But why flee?" asked the prisoner sadly and proudly. "I deserve

Digitized by Google

my fate, and will meet it like a man. How could I escape if I would!" Ricks continued, as a thought of life and liberty shot like lightning to his heart, and made it beat wildly in his bosom. "The brand is upon me, and justice would dog me wherever I went. Do not excite within me hopes which cannot be realized."

"Excite no false hopes. Do no good to *hang*, tell ye! nobody thank ye for 't. Go off — do good, and die natral."

Liberty is ever sweet. It lives and throbs in every heart. In spite of crime, of sorrow, of bolts and chains, its flame lingers in the human heart, and kindles up at the sound of deliverance. The slave dreams of it while at his task, and in his weary slumbers. The captive watches the sunlight, and the prison walls cannot hide from his vision the distant home and hills. Tyranny cannot crush it; iron cannot bind it, or steel kill it. 'Mid ruin it smoulders. Like the captive eagle, it beats its fetters as it listens to the wild scream in the distance.

Ricks had thought to meet his fate with resignation, convinced of its justice and necessity. But the love of liberty and life *is* sweet and never-dying. At the word of hope, that love grew wildly strong, and an ignominious death upon the scaffold was dreadful. He quickly rose upon his feet, but to sink again, as the sound of the clanking fetters fell like lead to his heart.

"*Devils!*" hissed Alf. "Chains on yet? Why

Digitized by Google

didn't you cut 'em — nobody bring a file here, eh?" and the sailor swung like a cat in upon the dungeon floor.

"A friend did bring something, but I supposed it a knife, and would not undo it," and here light flashed into the mind of Ricks.

"No knife — *file* — should 'a used it."

But Alf was not to be foiled. Feeling from the staple in the wall to the ancle of the prisoner, he found a link through which he could put the ends of two of the window gratings, and prying in opposite directions, the link was broken with ease. The same process wrenched the padlock from the fetter, and the limbs of the prisoner were free. None can tell the strange, wild emotions that stirred the heart, for he had given himself up to the hope of freedom, and escape from an ignominious death. Tears fell upon the hands of Alf as the latter removed the iron from the calloused ancle.

Swiftly and cautiously the two descended the ladder, and crossed the fields to the river. A skiff was hidden in the underbrush which lined the bank, into which the two sprang, and with a noiseless stroke, Alf struck out for the opposite shore. An hour's walk after landing, took them several miles up the ravine, by a foot-path which led over the mountains and across the wilderness to Pennsylvania. At a deserted sugar cabin, a horse was found saddled and fastened in a dense undergrowth.

"*Mount!*" whispered Alf, with emphasis, as he

Digitized by Google

unhitched the spirited animal and led him before Ricks.

"But the horse is not mine," said the latter, yet proud and honorable as in his better days.

"*Devil.* I know that; mine, though. Time lost, tell ye. *Away!* Better ride than *hang!*" and Alf seized the emaciated form of Ricks in his powerful grasp and swung him into the saddle as though he had been a child.

"There!" putting the reins into his hands, "money and bread in bags. Shun daylight and *rum.* Remember Crazy Alf and Minnie Hermon — ply the *gad!*" and ere the excited Ricks could thank his deliverer, the latter had disappeared with rapid strides down the dark gorge.

Alf muttered that peculiar chuckle as he listened to the quick ringing of hoofs up the mountain, and strode muttering back to the place where he had left his boat. It was brief work to replace the bars in the jail window, to wrench his ladder in pieces and cast it into the river, and steal away to the deserted hut where he sometimes found a shelter.

There was intense excitement in Oakvale on the morning of the day appointed for the execution of Ricks. On visiting the cell at day-break, but the irons which were upon the prisoner remained, and no farther signs which revealed the manner of his escape. By the appointed hour, more than five thousand people had assembled. To the disgrace of our common humanity, we are compelled to say that a

Digitized by Google

large class of both sexes manifested much ill temper in their disappointment. The immense throng at the scaffold finally gathered in the rear of the jail, as it became known that the prisoner made his escape from the window, and until a late hour discussed the matter, and gazed at the gloomy window as though they hoped to see the prey of the scaffold still within reach.

Hermon, intoxicated with excitement and rum, stormed imprecations upon those who procured the escape; for it was evident from the tracks to the window, that two persons had left the jail. Constables and parties returned late in the afternoon, finding no indication unusual, save the tracks of a horse under full gallop, but headed towards the river.

Alf had himself shod the horse with the shoes reversed, and with a lurking sneer he walked up to where Hermon stood in the crowd, and looked him steadily in the eye.

"Bird flown, eh? Didn't catch him, s'pose. *Murderers not all hung yet!* — ha! ha!"

Hermon turned away from that dreaded eye and entered the house. Drunkenness, rioting and horse-racing ended the day's history.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XIX.

THE WATT FAMILY.

In Rhode Island, many years ago, there lived a wealthy family by the name of How — their worth and standing equal to their worldly means.

With a morning sky unclouded, and light with hope, the accomplished and favorite daughter of Major How married an estimable young man by the name of Watt, a gentleman of high integrity, honor, and irreproachable private character. His future was full of promise, and he took his young bride to a home of happiness and affluence.

The customs of the day stealthily fastened a love of wine in the system of young Watt, gathering strength while the victim dreamed not of danger. Indeed he would have laughed at the idea of danger to a man of his mind and position. The current swept beneath with a swifter tide, while he beat the waves with feebler stroke. It was long before Bertha Watt realized the fall of her heart's idol. Day by day brought the fearful truth to her mind, until the heart-crushing conviction fell like a stunning blow upon her happiness and hopes. She was not the woman to complain. Proud of the world's opinion, but meek and gentle, she suffered alone with her tears,

Digitized by Google

hiding the ragged iron in her soul. Bertha had none of that sterner stuff in her nature which rallies as the storm beats down hope after hope; but alone with her babes, her shrinking and trusting spirit, as mild as the sky of summer, suffered on. The young cheek paled, and the light grew dim in the eye. She would not, for a world, have spoken to her high-minded and sensitive husband of the dark vice which already left a broad shadow of coming ill at their hearth-side.

In their new home near Lake George, in York State, the almost-despairing wife and mother hoped that her husband would escape many of the baneful influences of the society he had been accustomed to move in. The hope was vain. The drinking usages of pioneer life, though less refined, were none the less general and fatal. And besides, step by step, Watt had lost much of his chivalric pride of character — his manhood was degraded. The crater kindled within him, was burning out every sentiment of his better nature. He became familiar with coarseness and vice, gambled without hesitation, and was often in a state of shameful intoxication. His business was neglected and his temper soured; he spent most of his evenings at the tavern, and when at home was sullen and harsh, or broadly abusive.

Darkly the days dawned at the neglected hearth, and darker still their evenings. The unkind word and constant neglect, were wringing to agony the heart's every fibre, and unseen tears, scalding with sorrow, were wearing deep channels in the pale and

Digitized by Google

wasting cheek. The pure smile and winning way of the babe, or the witching laughter and prattle of the older children, had no power to win a parent from the embrace of the tempter. Home, and its circle, was deserted for the bar-room; the wife and her treasures, for the cup and the boon companion. The trail of all his ruin was broadly slimed from the threshold to the hearth, and there Want and Despair sat amid the domestic wreck. No resource of the mother could long keep her loved ones from going forth in rags. The appeal for bread, made in the silvery voice of trusty childhood, was answered with a curse, and from the barren board, the recreant husband and parent went forth to steep his soul in deeper potations. The child that once crawled upon the knee and threw her light arms over the shoulders, and with stainless lip kissed the bearded cheek, now shrunk away and hushed its half-sad mouth at the dreaded approach.

—And thus an idolized parent's returning tread was the herald of sorrow and tears, and his darkening form a shadow upon every joy which, like pale flowers, still sprung up on the wintry waste.

From carelessness when drunk, the dwelling was fired, and the family driven from their beds into the snow of a winter's night, one of the older girls leaping from the chamber window just as the flaming roof fell in. After this fresh calamity, the family removed to Cherry Valley, and still again to ——— county.

In the haggard and sottish drunkard, none would

Digitized by Google

have recognized James Watt. He was ill-tempered and abusive in the extreme; quarrelsome, reckless and profane, and outraged nearly all the proprieties of life. At times, he would earn money fast but to spend it in one prolonged debauch. Not a penny ever went for the support of his family.

Mrs. Watt and her children existed from day to day, no one knew how. The children and herself were in rags. Silently and in secret, for tears provoked the harsh word or blow, she wept away her life. With a languid step and a vacant stare, she moved about, hoping for the long rest of death, yet dreading to leave those who now alone bound her to earth. Late at night she toiled, and the morning found her without rest. With a compressed lip, she bore the sharp gnawings of hunger, that her babes might not want for bread, and still the moan of the famished one would often pierce the lacerated heart like heated barbs. She was yoked to a living corpse, and as she listened to the snoring of the drunkard in his slumbers and smelled the stench of the consuming fires, she could look down into a once manly heart, now a seething crater, where all her earlier and brighter hopes lay smouldering in charred and blackened ruins. The lips it had been her pride to greet were flaming with rum and the wanton's loathsome kiss. As she felt new life throbbing in her bosom, she locked her wasted fingers together and prayed to die.

— Ill-fated Bertha! there was dark ending of life's summer day after so light a morning!

Digitized by Google

Summer was fading into autumn, and the leaves were already falling. Within a miserable tenement, Bertha Watt was fading away. Few ever entered the pauper dwelling, and with her children to watch her, she journeyed downward to the dark valley. A few were charitable, and the family were saved from actual starvation. Desolate and cheerless the room and the couch of the dying; more desolate still the stricken heart, as she looked around upon a group of ten, who were doubly bound to her by the ties of years of common suffering. Yet, blessed God of the poor! Hope lit her torch at the waning flame of life, and pointed sweetly away, over the misty realm of sod and slab, to one of happiness and rest.

As the sharp wail of her tears broke upon the night's stillness, Bertha Watt lay silent in death. The crushed and broken spirit of the meek and injured sufferer was free from its wasted temple, and far out upon a shoreless sea!

They said she died of consumption. Aye, consumption of the heart — its hopes, like drops of blood dripping away, through the long night hours of rayless years. Hidden away, and unseen by the public eye, are such triumphs of the scourge as these, and thickly written in the history of its progress, as are the leaves upon the forest in summer time.

— And there is a place where the weary and the heavy-laden shall find rest!

A wide world for the worse than orphans! Rum had not yet sufficiently ravaged their home. From

Digitized by Google

the grave of the wife and mother, James Watt went back to the bar-room, more abandoned and shameless than ever. Rum had burned out the image of her who stood with him at the altar, a trusting and a happy young bride. He never gave his family a thought. Penniless, fireless, and breadless, gathered the stricken group where a home had been. While the earth was still fresh upon the mother's grave, the rumsellers came with their executions, and stripped, under a stringent law, the very bedding which that mother, in all their misfortunes, had retained, as the gift of her girlhood's home. But another blow came. The imbruted father sold the cow, and with the proceeds, left the village with a boon companion, and squandered it in dissipation.

Two older sisters fought hard to keep the family circle unbroken. The father returned to curse them. They whom he once loved, and who loved him with all the holy intensity of child-love in return, learned to hate him, and as he went from the dwelling, prayed in hearts fearfully old in grief, that he never might return. And in a land of Christians, James Watt had that dealt out to him for his money which demonized his manhood, and made him desert and hate his own flesh and blood, and fostered hatred in return! Slowly the sacred ties which bound parent and child were withered and broken, under the scorching fires of the bowl.

Money exhausted, the father returned. The elder daughters toiled in a factory, its bell starting them

Digitized by Google

from feverish slumbers, and its walls a prison to their drooping frames. Every Saturday night, the father would demand the wages of heart and brain-aching toil, and spend the money for rum with his companions on the Sabbath. And many a day did the children gather around the rickety table, with bran bread its only dainty, a jug of rum upon the shelf, and a drunken father snoring upon the floor.

— The children, who had committed no crime, went hungry and ragged, that the licensed robber might have his plenty!

Darker yet gloomed the sky over the Watt family. As per poor laws of that day, the younger children were *struck off at auction*, and put out to be kept by the *lowest bidder*, while arrangements were made to seize the others, and from town to town drive them back to the county they came from. One child-sister, of four years — a sweet child in rags, whose tiny hands never wronged a being on earth, and who never knew why she was a pauper — found cold-hearted keepers, and in the winter time, died in the entryway upon rags for bedding, and *covered with vermin*, no mother's hand leading her into the shadowy land, or sister's kiss warming upon the chilly lip. The blue eye, which had known little but tears, turned upward to a Christ kinder than men, and glittered with frost in the clear morning sun.

The grave lies between the two worlds. The winter sod shut the infant victim beyond the reach of the scourge, and she wept for bread no more.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XX.

"MORAL SUASION."

Much has been said and written, in the course of the temperance reform, about the power of moral suasion. There is a power in its tear and its tone. With kind words it appeals to the better nature and essays to win back the fallen. With a gentle voice and look it knocks at the heart of the erring and points out a better way. It meets the prodigal with a tear and says, "go and sin no more." In a thousand forms it finds the human heart in its wanderings, and with a tear for its follies, points with a smile of hope and forgiveness back to honor and truth. The proud spirit which would fling back with scorn the hatred of a world, would melt and sway like a summer leaf at the gentle whispering of words of kindness.

Moral suasion has accomplished much in winning men from their cups — more than the penal enactments which drag the drunkard from a *legalized hell*, to incarceration or fine. It has saved many from the fang which glitters in the bubbles on the breaker's brim. Even from the midst of deepest ruin, some word or kindly deed has brought back the erring to virtue and duty. It is doing much yet, and will never fail to do much while there are hearts to love the drunkard and weep over his ruin.

Digitized by Google

There are some of our friends who avow their readiness to rely solely upon the power of moral suasion for the removal of intemperance. It seems to us a strange infatuation. Prayers, and tears, and appealing words, against an evil impregnable in its citadels of legislation, and backed by the whole force of the government! Would the same friends content themselves with appealing to the incendiary and the murderer to spare their homes and their lives, and the torch and the knife at the same time commissioned to do the infernal work, and the hand that wielded them protected by law? What would the cold-blooded butcher care for the pleading of innocence or weakness, when licensed, *for a price*, to drench the very hearth in warm blood? And would the incendiary, empowered to burn, and sustained by the so called respectable, in the light of the kindling flame, renounce the desolating business which he had purchased of government the right to engage in?

God never designed that a wicked world should be governed by moral suasion. He himself has put on record penal enactments against sin—against vice and crime. Until human nature is utterly changed, moral suasion, as a sole-restraining power, will be impotent. All the blessed influences of the Gospel, the influence of home, friends, virtuous teachings, and the hopes of happiness and Heaven, as a motive power, will not restrain the vicious. All men are not susceptible of moral influences. If they were, the dust of oblivion might gather upon our statutes, and

Digitized by Google

not a crime should mar the harmony of the universal brotherhood of man.

Those who deal in rum, are certainly the last class which should ever utter a word about moral suasion, and claim that the temperance reform should be carried forward upon that basis alone. We could smile at the coolness of the idea but for its insulting wickedness. It comes with a bad grace in the teeth of facts, upon a record of more than twenty-five years' duration. Here as elsewhere, moral suasion has had its effect, and men, regardful of its influences, have yielded to the light of truth and abandoned a wickedness. And in the high noon of our reform, those who still persist, against reason, right and revelation, in the business, ask the people to follow their direction in the matter, and continue a course which up to this day they have utterly disregarded!

With legislation against it, it requires the whole power of the temperance reform to keep its giant antagonist at bay, while in security it revels upon all which comes within its clutch. Moral suasion knows not a phase which it has not assumed in this great work. From broken altars where every domestic tie lay shivered, prayers have gone up where there was no hope but of Heaven. Gather them from the angels' record, and a tempest of prayers would swell its note of accusing thunder. An ocean of tears has dripped its bitter way over cheeks which bloom not again. Days and years have passed by, until ages of sorrow have accumulated in judgment. Wherever

Digitized by Google

the victims of the wrong have loved, and suffered, and died — at home, in the alms-house, dungeon, or on the scaffold, — the sob, the sorrow, and the wail, have appealed to the authors of all the woe, vice and crime. Mutely, but ah! how eloquently, the cowering and ragged drunkard's child, and the pale-faced wife and mother, have presented to the dealer his cruel wickedness and their bitter wrongs!

The rumseller is not ignorant or deaf. He knows the sweep of the engine in his hands. He sees its effects, and while his own neighbors, and kindred even, are demonized and imbruted by the drug from his hands, he sends them home to wound the innocent and the helpless. Every coin he drops into his drawer, is the price of the hunger, nakedness and degradation of those who never wronged him or his. He knows the enslaved appetite cannot turn away, and he feeds it to the death. He deliberately manufactures a kind husband and father into a devil, and a happy home into a hell, where the victim can torment his own wife and children! Entrenched with legislation and leagued with unscrupulous demagogues, they have continued this fearful work against all the efforts of the tongue and pen. Their victims have suffered, and wept, and died, in vain. Human and divine laws have alike been trampled upon; and to-day, while preaching moral suasion, they are banding to sustain the system of cruelty and wrong at every hazard.

Moral suasion! Let the stricken mother go pray

Digitized by Google

upon the slippery deck of the pirate when blood leaps smoking from the scuppers, and beg the life of her boy! Send childhood with a tear on its cheek, into the den of the famished tigress, and with a silvery voice beseech the life of a parent, writhing in her remorseless fangs!

—For the universe of God, its wealth and its honors, we would not, in the light of this day, have the guilt of rumselling rest heavy on our soul.

One more visit to the miserable tenement of Watt. All that the law spared has been carried off by Watt and pawned at the tavern. The Bible of the dead wife, her only legacy to her children, has been stolen from the place where young Bertha Watt hid it, as a priceless treasure, and sacred with the heart-drops which had fallen upon the worn pages, and sold for rum.

Little Bernard Watt lay sick unto death. With many a bitter curse, the father had turned from the door, as Bertha plead that her sick brother might have the doctor called, and left for the tavern.

And all within was hushed and still—every footfall as light as the falling leaf, for fear of disturbing the sick one. With hot tears upon her cheek, Bertha leaned upon the scanty couch, the tiny and feverish hand clasped convulsively within her own, as if to hold the boy-brother to earth. Though pale and fading, the features were classically beautiful; but a clammy sweat had gathered upon the white brow, rich with the last kisses of a dying mother.

Digitized by Google

The chubby cheek had grown thin and touchingly pale; the eye had lost its laughter, and looked languidly upon the group around him. The white teeth appeared through the half-closed lips, and the rich golden hair lay back upon the coarse blanket pillow. On the fourth day, as the sun was going down in the west, the child was passing away.

Through the broken window, a broad beam of sunshine, like a ray from bliss, entered and trembled for a moment upon the hair, and then burst like a flood upon the pale features of the child. He turned his face to the sun, and a smile, sweeter than the sunlight, came over the wasted and bloodless lips. Upon that golden pathway the little one was smiling back upon kindred angels in Heaven!

"Bertha, do they always have sunshine in Heaven? — and will my little flower grow there, and the birds sing? — and will the angels you told me about last night be good and love me?"

"Mother is there, — she will love you," replied the choking Bertha.

"How I want to die! You say I won't hunger there, Bertha, and I'll have clothes so bright, and always feel happy. I won't cry there, Bertha, will I?"

Bertha could not answer from her swelling heart, but the tears wound their way down her cheeks, and fell like rain-drops upon the glistening locks of Bernard.

"Bertha!" — and the boy looked wildly out into the room, and shut his sharp thin fingers tightly upon

Digitized by Google

her arm, and in a whisper continued — "Father won't be there to whip us 'cause we can't help crying, will he? Oh, I hope Mr. Hermon won't go there, to sell any rum. The good God don't sell rum, does he? Why can't you die, too, Bertha, and go when the angels come after me?" Sobs only answered the faint prattle of the innocent.

"Bertha, give me some more of that toast. When I get to Heaven I'll tell ma how good Minnie Hermon was to us." Bertha looked, and the toast was gone, and with it the loaf of bread and the wine which Minnie Hermon had brought that morning, as she learned of their sickness and destitution. The father had robbed the dying, and sold the loaf for two drams. There was not a morsel of food for the boy, and Bertha's heart almost broke as she thought how cruel that Bernard should die hungry.

"Bertha — I'm going to sleep — kiss me. Good night! Bright! — ma, Bernard com — ing!"

The setting sunbeams lingered upon the palid face of the sinless sleeper, as the whispers fell with crushing weight into the hearts of the little band. The pauper children loved each other.

The night of death had gathered around the little brother. The pilgrim of four summers had turned aside from a cloudy pathway, and passed directly to Heaven. He who loved such, led the gentle spirit through the shadows of the dark valley.

Even in that curtainless, carpetless room, there were gentle footsteps in the depths of the night,

Digitized by Google

where lay the unwatched and unshrouded dead. Convulsive sobbing, and many a flood of tears, and close and warm were the kisses which clustered upon the chill and unanswering lips of all that remained of Bernard Watt.

. . . . . .

Early one morning Hermon met Minnie upon the hall steps, with her work basket in hand and hood on. He had, by dissipation, become utterly insensible to shame, and at times ill-tempered towards all. As he became degraded by his own habits and avocation, and blackened with guilt, he was bitter and revengeful. The consuming wreck of his nobler nature kindled into intenser flame all that was mean and base. He had just received one of the stinging shots of Doctor Howard, in relation to his treatment of the Watt family, and was much exasperated.

"Who now have you taken to support?" he angrily demanded of Minnie.

"No one, father."

"But where are you going?"

"To Watt's."

"D——n the Watts! I've heard enough about the paupers," he retorted, snatching the basket from her hand, the contents falling upon the steps.

"What now! — clothing, too, eh? A fine pass, if I've got to clothe and feed all the paupers in the country."

"*Clothing* for the *dead*, father; this is a shroud for little Bernard Watt. *He's dead!*"

Digitized by Google

"Pity they wan't all dead!" muttered the thoroughly brutal dealer, as he turned away.

Unseen by Minnie, Bertha Watt had entered the "Home" from the other street, and met Hermon as he left his daughter in the hall. Watt had taken a ham which Doctor Howard had sent to the children, and upon the pawn-money was deadly drunk in the bar-room. Boiled turnips and salt, without bread — without anything else — had constituted their breakfast. From the table, Bertha, with but a thin handkerchief upon her head, her heart running over with injuries inflicted, started for the "Home."

As Hermon entered his bar-room, he started at the thread-bare and shivering apparition before him. Bertha caught him by the hand, and poured into his ear a tale which a damned one would dread to hear — a tale of grief, hunger, cold, neglect and abuse. She knelt before the man and wet his hand, in spite of himself, with scalding tears, as she besought him for her mother's Bible, and that he would not sell her father rum. With an eloquence which is only woman's under similar circumstances, she told the history of cruelty in a drunkard's home.

"Don't come here to blubber, bold Miss. This is no place for woman. Better tend to your own business, and go to work instead of begging round the neighborhood. Your father can take care of himself. Better leave, I say," and Hermon put his hand rudely upon the shoulder of the girl, and crowded her towards the door.

Digitized by Google

"That's (hic)—right, Miz-zer Hermon, turn the (hic)—hussy out, by ——!" hiccoughed the shameless father, as he managed to rise from his chair, and thrust his hands into his torn pockets.

As Bertha stepped over the threshold upon the steps, slippery with frost, Hermon passionately slammed the door together. Striking her feet as she lingered, they were knocked from under her, and she fell quickly and heavily at full length upon the stones, shivered as the limbs extended, and lay still, the blood running freely from the nose and open mouth upon the step.

"God Almighty's curse upon ye, murderer of the innocent, and robber of men! The gibbet would scorn such carrion, and hell vomit you from its bowels, John Hermon!" literally howled Crazy Alf between his fiercely set teeth, as he bounded over the prostrate body, and planted a crushing blow under the ear of the now sobered landlord, which would have felled a trio of such men. "Strike a woman, you cowardly savage!" he hissed, and ground his heel into the face of the prostrate wretch.

Alf had seen her fall, and supposing that Hermon had struck her, his half-maniac nature boiled at the act.

"*Murderers not all hung yet!*" he muttered, as he glanced upon the landlord; then taking Bertha in his arms, he carried her to Doctor Howard's.

Minnie made another shroud, and another grave was dug in potter's field. Bertha was with little Ber-

Digitized by Google

nard at rest. The door of Heaven was not shut against them, or the prayer answered with a curse.

The Watt family were scattered. Their graves are wide apart in this land to-day. Three years ago, in ——— county, James Watt died a pauper by the roadside, and at the public expense was buried in potter's field.

—The Pilgrim blood of the Watt family, freighted with bitter memories, beats in living hearts, who with prayers of hope and faith await the day when a righteous enactment shall crush the evil which scourged them, and avenge their wrongs.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXI.

A BEACON ON THE WASTE.

We will not — could not, detail the fearful history of the ravages of rum in Oakvale. The serpent had slimed every threshold, and lay coiled upon nearly every hearth. Pauperism, Vice and Crime stalked hand in hand, and the almshouse and jail swarmed with human wrecks. Fortunes, rank and standing had drifted into these receptacles, yet the storm swept on, with not a star of hope in the sky — all dark, cheerless, desolating.

The wildest dreams of fiction would prove tame in comparison. Tragedies more fearfully startling than Avon's bard ever traced, had often occurred. Scenes which would mock to scorn the artist's pencil, were of daily occurrence. The home where a heart desolated clings to and weeps over the wrecks of its youth-idol; the child-group shivering in the cold, or clinging to a mother and asking for bread; the orphan turned out into the world with no friend but God; Youth wrecked and palsied with premature age; Manhood reeling amid the ruins of moral and intellectual beauty, where a thousand hopes are buried; Genius crumbling in ruins and driveling in idiocy; the virtuous and high-minded turning away from truth and honor, and plunging into every vice; the parent and

Digitized by Google

citizen wandering away from a home-heaven through a dark pilgrimage to a dishonored grave; hearthside altars cast down, and the home transformed into a hell; Childhood and Innocence thrust out from the love-light of a mother's eye, to wallow in all that's low and vile; Poverty and Want looking with pinched and piteous gaze upon the scanty tribute of Charity, as Hunger drove them out in their rags; foul and festering Vice, with bloated and sickly features, leering and driveling in leprous bestiality; Madness, with fiery eye and haggard mien, weeping, and wailing, and cursing in the rayless night of intellectual chaos; Murder with its infernal ha! ha! as with dripping blade, and smoking in hot blood, stalked forth from butchery; — these and ten thousand other combinations of warp and woof with rum and skill, would weave a fibre of terrific intensity and power. The hovel, the dramshop, the subterranean den, and the mansion of fashion and wealth, furnished their chapters of revolting history. The weird creations of history would be faint copies of what transpired in Oakvale. Religion mourned over the broad inroads upon her heritage, for from the desk and the bosom of the church of Christ, souls were dragged away. Patriotism turned aghast at the sweeping destruction of the staunch citizen and the most gifted statesman. Humanity wept over the desolations. Still, men lay down and rotted while they died; for no brazen serpent had been lifted. There was one dead in every house, and still the Angel of the Plague

Digitized by Google

commissioned by human power, continued to feast upon death in its aceldamas of blood.

A few of the more striking events may be mentioned in passing. Leonard Bascomb, a young man of twenty, carried his jug into the woods. A brother, in going after wood at night, drove the sled against him, and rolled the dead body out of the snow which had covered it, the jug clenched firmly in the stiffened fingers. The corpse was carried to a deserted cabin, where the jury of inquest drinked from the dead man's jug before any testimony was taken!

Little Willie Warner went from Hermon's with his father's jug, and froze by the wayside. The next morning the remains of the Warner family were found amid the smoking timbers of the burned dwelling. By the headless and limbless trunk of the mother, the white bones of the babe glared in the blackened ruins. None but God knew whether butchery was not there hidden in the ruins, and its blood licked up by the flames.

An old and once respectable citizen returned home late at night, and in his rage turned his wife and babe out into the storm, and after first burying the axe in the head of one of the sleeping boys, cast the body upon the fire. The older boy jumped from the window, the axe severing his hand as he sprang to the ground. The mother was found dead, nearly naked, and the clothing wrapped around her child, her hair frozen to the cheek of the babe with tears and sleet.

The West family, mother and three children, were

Digitized by Google

frozen in one of the severest storms of the season. The husband had been sent to purchase medicine, but drank, then gambled, and for three days lay at the house in bestial intoxication. The wife was found upon her knees, her hands tightly clasped, and a tear-drop frozen upon the icy cheek; the babe before her on the floor, its fingers standing out from each other, and the two older children locked together in their crib, as if to keep each other warm. George West became sober, but to learn the extent of his wickedness, and to live on helplessly insane. For years he lingered in the asylum, and called piteously for his wife and children.

— But it is painful to linger over so extended and dark a record.

About this time, the news came that temperance societies were forming in the eastern part of the State. It was received with a laugh of scorn by some, and astonishment by all. As the object became known, and the pledge, the astonishment was greater still. Pledged to abstain from even the moderate use of alcoholic drinks! It was the very essence of fanaticism! So radical an inroad upon the good old customs of the times, was truly startling — 'twas outrageous. What was the world coming to! What could people do without ardent spirits? They could not withstand hard work, grief, heat, cold, or wet. Men must be crazy to think of such a thing. Temperance was a good thing, but this was going altogether too far, and the people would not stand it. Some were

Digitized by Google

wiser than the common bar-room rabble, and saw in the new movement only a scheme of priests for the union of church and state. Good citizens were imperatively bound to frown upon the mad scheme of designing men.

In due time a temperance meeting was announced for Oakvale. The churches were closed against the agent, and after much wrangling, the school-house was selected for the occasion.

Such a commotion in Oakvale! The rumsellers, old Hermon conspicuous among them, felt outraged—indignant at so disgraceful a proceeding. They were as much friends of *temperance* as anybody, but this priest-craft, speculation, and union of church and state — why, such men ought to be rode out of town. Groups discussed the momentous question every night until the meeting, and the tipplers hiccoughed amen.

The afternoon came, nearly every drunkard's wife, some of the middle class of women, a few of the better citizens, and the rumsellers and tipplers, were all that attended. Many of the wealthier class did not deem the matter of the least consequence, and paid no attention to it. None of the clergymen were present. The old soaks looked knowingly, and winked at one another with mock gravity. The dealers sneered upon the whole transaction, and felt sure of looking down the hot-headed affair. Crazy Alf sat with his chin in his palms, as usual, and behind him, old Barney Kits. The rumsellers were flanked by their

Digitized by Google

best customers, not omitting Counselor Skillot, of puritanic phiz.

The speaker was a clergyman, of medium height, slightly gray, benevolent countenance, and great good humor. As calm as a summer's morning, he arose, and in a familiar and unassuming manner, introduced his subject. He told no anecdotes, — made no startling appeals; but in a plain, common-sense manner, detailed what all knew to be facts. He dwelt upon intemperance, its desolations in the domestic circle, its annual destruction of drunkards, its direct agency in producing pauperism and crime, and in increasing taxation, and showed the necessity of doing something to arrest the growing evil. All classes would see the necessity of such a step, for nearly all had been injured by its ravages. The pledge was proposed as the instrument of the measure, concentrating and harmonizing action, and bringing the friends of the measure upon a common platform, where their influence would be more efficient. It was a fraternal bond. It had been objected that men who took it would sign away their liberties. What liberties? The liberty to use that which produced individual degradation and family ruin? Which destroyed industry and brought beggary in its train? To be sure, all who drink do not die drunkards. But from drinkers comes the vast array of drunkards who go down to premature graves. Here is a safer path. None who go this way, are in danger. None who go the other, are safe. It was not expected that the drunk-

Digitized by Google

ards could be saved. They were bound by an appetite which could not be controlled. Those who were not yet slaves, ought to turn away from the temptations of the cup. Those who had not yet formed an appetite, ought certainly to give their names and their influence to save the youth of the land from destruction. The pledge was merely an expression of sentiment in union as touching one object, committing those who signed it against the prevalent evils of intemperance. Society was a pledge — government was a pledge — the church was a pledge. But it was said that the signing of a pledge was an acknowledgment of weakness — of danger from intemperance. It was but an expression of opinion publicly made, a solemn giving of name and influence to a certain object. It was said that men did not need a pledge. The pledge makes a resolution stronger, and brings those of similar views in closer union. The Declaration of Independence was a pledge. Those who staked life, fortune, and honor, in signing it, did not deem the act any impeachment of their patriotism or of their strength of attachment to the principles of liberty. It was the great anchor of freedom, thrown out in the storm, and held indissolubly together, while giving them strength and influence to contend with England. The speaker concluded by an earnest appeal to all good citizens to come forward in the work, and presented for the action of the meeting, the pledge, constitution, and form of organization. After a few moments' silence, Her-

Digitized by Google

mon moved that Counselor Skillot be the president of the new temperance society. In good faith, the speaker put the question, and it was adopted amid the tittering of Hermon's crew. Doctor Howard, from the first, had seen the truth and the necessity of the very measure proposed, and eagerly entered into the plan, determined to follow Hermon with something more than child's play, and immediately nominated Walter Brayton as secretary. The motion was carried, putting a more serious aspect upon the affair. Treating the matter seriously riled Hermon, and, for the purpose of insulting Brayton, Howard, and the movement, he nominated Crazy Alf as a committee on resolutions. A few tittered, but the most of them anticipated trouble for the aggressor. Alf raised to his full height, and leveling his long finger at Hermon, and hissing between his clenched teeth, retorted:

"And Crazy Alf moves, Mr. Speaker, that Mr. Hermon be a committee to look after drunkard's wives and children, and report number and condition to the next meeting!"

The thrust went to the red, and Hermon belched out:

"Turn out the drunken vagabond. I did n't come here to be insulted."

"I'm not in your bar-room, sir," continued Alf, walking towards Hermon; "nor am I drunker than the man I bought my liquor of."

Hermon drew his fist menacingly, but quailed as

Digitized by Google

he looked into the glittering eye and upon the huge proportions of his antagonist.

"Stop to measure when you strike *men*, eh!" continued Alf, as he surmised the thoughts of the landlord. "'T wan't so with — ha, ha! — with *Bertha Watt!*"

The barb went to the feather, and was sped by the hand of a customer. Skillott wanted to know if gentlemen who came here were to be abused by drunken men, and Hermon, muttering curses, indignantly left the house. His friends finally left, one after another, and the remaining people proceeded with the organization. You can see, quietly remarked the speaker, that Satan's kingdom is divided against itself and must fall. Whereupon Deacon McGarr, with an air of holy horror, also left. Skillott sat uneasy, but wished to see the end of the meeting. He declined signing the pledge when it came round — he was not exactly prepared to give an opinion upon the matter, and he stroked his chin, and looked uncommonly candid and wise. The pledge had passed, when what was the surprise of those present to see Alf step boldly forward and append his name to the pledge — "*Crazy Alf.*"

Skillott, at the close of the meeting, went immediately to the tavern, where the tipplers and some of the neighboring magnates were busily discussing the temperance meeting. The would-be demagogue here appeared in his true colors, and in low and vulgar slang heaped abuse upon the movement. Hermon

Digitized by Google

declared it was all got up by Howard and Brayton to injure him, and as for Alf, he should never have any more liquor at his bar.

"Without the money," put in old Barney.

"Shut up, you old devil!" snapped Hermon, "or I'll start your drunken carcass forthwith." Barney loved rum, and smothered the cutting reply that came to his tongue's end.

"Let 'em come here to get me to sign the pledge," sneered Hermon, as he resumed his conversation with Skillott. "But what 'll you do?"

"O! let me alone for that. I'll write 'em a letter declining the honor — ha, ha! and tell 'em a thing or two. I only wanted to see which way the cat jumped."

That was a capital idea, and the company drank around, Hermon getting in better humor and treating old Barney.

A committee had been appointed at the meeting to obtain signatures to the pledge. Doctor Howard was one of the committee and boldly offered the paper to all. Hermon and the brother grog-sellers were already friends of temperance men, but these fanatics were making altogether too much fuss — going too far. Better mind their own business. He had as good a right to sell liquor as the Doctor had to sell medicine. It was his business to get an honest living, and tend to his own concerns. If his neighbors wanted to combine against him, they could work at it. He had done a good deal for the place, and did not

Digitized by Google

expect to be abused because he was trying to accommodate the public and support his family.

"By robbing other families!" put in Alf, who had come up unobserved. Hermon wanted no more encounters with that personage, and turned into his bar.

Drunkards would not sign the pledge — it was signing away their liberties — glorious privileges their fathers fought for, while the better class, so called, looked over the list of names with undisguised contempt. They would not be found in such company. It was well enough for drunkards and women, but too vulgar for their countenance. Even the sister of George West turned up her nose as Minnie Hermon asked her name. Let weak minds take the pledge, for her part she should be ashamed if she thought there was any need of her signing it. Others tittered as they saw the name of Alf, and of some poor women in the neighborhood. Howard was often discouraged, but believed himself right, and had the moral courage to stand by it.

Many were the sharp and witty sayings about the "cold-water" scheme. There were merry times in the bar-rooms, but many looked thoughtful as some worthy citizens gave their names to the move. Alf stood by his pledge, and became a theme of remark, especially as he waged an incessant and bitter war upon the rummies, and drew off some two or three of the hardest customers. Many a plan was laid to get the renegades to drink again.

Digitized by Google

— Slowly and dimly the star of the reform went up. From the pulpit and the church it met with opposition. But in desolate homes, and with a rumseller's daughter, it found hearts which watched its early dawning with earnest hope.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXII.

BREAKING GROUND AGAIN.

The old pledge was the entering wedge of the temperance revolution. It was an untried experiment—the commencement of a great work. More could not have been achieved at the time. It was the first distant and rudely constructed parallel before the overshadowing fortress of the monster iniquity. It was but the faint bugle blast upon the stillness of the slumbering dead, and few were the friends who aroused to the unequal strife. It but heralded in feeble foreshadowings the coming of a brighter day. It performed its work, but scarcely left a mark upon the enemy. The tenderly feathered missiles fell short of the mark, harmless and inefficient, in effecting the final object.

Deacon McGarr found no trouble in adhering to the pledge. He drinked with the drinkers, yet preserved it inviolate. While the ragged bloat at his elbows swallowed his raw grog, the Deacon sipped his wine, and descanted eloquently upon the virtues and duties of temperance. He faithfully warned them of the danger of such habits—the good temperance man! Many were the nights he went home from the tavern heavy-laden with the beverage, and then ad-

Digitized by Google

ded the usual mug of hard cider before retiring to his deep and peculiar slumbers.

Early in the winter, McGarr and Barney Kits started for home one night, and as neighbors, became more than usually friendly as they assisted each other arm in arm. It would have puzzled an observer to have determined which was the drunk one. Striking a drift in the path, McGarr stumbled, and breaking loose, the two parted, the Deacon falling on his face in one direction, and Barney backwards in another, into the drift to the arms, in a sitting position. McGarr was soon upon his hands and knees, grunting with his exertions to rise, and spitting the feathery snow from his mouth. He partially succeeded in rising, but stepping upon Barney's jug, it rolled from under him, and down he went, this time in a sitting posture, the snow gushing up like spray as he settled to the crust. It was in vain to try to raise squarely up.

"Barney, my f-friend; why the d-dogs don't you (hic)—help a—*where be you, B-arney?*"

"Halloo, Deacon! you th–there?"

"No; I'm here."

"So be B-arney,

> 'An' that—that f–fast anchor'd hi–hile,
> And they do—(hic) roll'—

You—you there yet, Deacon? Where's my j–*ug?*"

"No, I'm here. Your—your jug, Barney, has—has (hic) throwed me down."

Digitized by Google

"Me too, many a-a time."

"Barney! you o-ought not to (hic) drink so, you —had n't. Barney, help me — up. This cus — this con-f-ounded crick in my (hic) back, h-olds me down, B-arney."

"The *creek* went d-own your throat, I guess," replied the ever witty Kits.

"My friend, I— I'm Deacon Mc-McGarr. You should speak properly — you should."

"And I 'm Barny Kits. I re-re—I regret to see a deacon so-so *spiritually* inclined."

"I am lame, Barney; assist me if you p-lease," and McGarr wallowed over within reach of Barney.

"Lift, McGarr! *now* he-he-*heave!*"

Barney had crawled up to McGarr and caught awkwardly into the skirts of his coat, and was lifting as awkwardly, managing in the operation to pull the coat over McGarr's head and wrongside out. At the same time McGarr had fastened one hand into the seat of his pantaloons, and the other into Barney's shirt bosom, and was tugging and blowing industriously to raise himself upon his feet. At last they both managed to get upon their knees, and their arms around each other's neck, and leaning hard upon each other, trying to rise, McGarr lurched and both fell sideways into the snow. Here they were sprawling and clinging to each other as Doctor Howard drove nearly upon them with his horse and cutter. With considerable effort he lumbered them into the cutter and drove back to the tavern. As they were aided

Digitized by Google

into the bar-room, Deacon McGarr felt that he must say something about Barney's drinking. The latter, as he came to the fire, had lopped helplessly down upon the floor.

"What a (hic)—a sad sight to—s-ee a man in such a sit-sit-*sittyation*, Doctor How-ard!"

So it was! But Barney was no drunker than the Deacon, yet the latter had violated no pledge, and was a temperance man in good standing.

Our readers will see the working of the old pledge. The appeal to the bloated customer of the dramshop fell with pointless effect from lips fuming with wine. The effects of wine and common whisky were the same. They both produced drunkenness. Day by day and step by step the wine drinker went downward, until he became a common drunkard and an outcast, yet violated no pledge until he commenced upon "*ardent* or distilled spirits!"

The history of those who attempted to reform under the old pledge, is a sad one. In a milder garb the enemy lurked in the wine cup, and the still bound victim went back to ruin. The demon glittered in the first drop. The light of the wine bubble would kindle into intensity the fires deepest smouldering in the crater. The milder drink was the sure precursor of the flood in its fury, and there was no safety to the reformed one. The wine drinker might reel from the midnight revel, or drool in the saloon, and yet be all that the old pledge demanded. The sot caught sight of the first beacon flame which shone dimly into the

Digitized by Google

surrounding darkness, and turned to greet its better promise. The power in the wine glass, the beer or cider, harassed his footsteps, and plunged him again into the abyss, where he beat the wave with a feeble hand. Few of the baser streams were dried up, for the fountain head flowed on as ever, from the side-board and the social and festive party. The blasted wrecks in the drunkery were but the legitimate results of the very priviliges tolerated under the old pledge. It was but a cobweb around the uncrippled folds of the Hydra. Not a head had been successfully struck off. The wine drops were but the bloody seed of new monsters, for not a wound had been seared in the contest.

At this point the Total Abstinence Pledge was brought out. It followed naturally in the footsteps of the other. The old had prepared the way for the new. It added a brighter glow to the first beacon light.

From the truest friends of the cause it met with stern opposition. These men saw in it ruin to the great work. It was the extreme of ultraism. It was too radical. Its adoption would destroy what little good had been effected, and forever block the work so auspiciously begun. The contest was fierce between temperance men. A large class were honestly fearful of the result from love of the cause, while others clung to their "harmless beverage." Many of the latter class occupy the same position to-day. They never have advanced. They broke off during

Digitized by Google

the struggle, and there they remain, such as have not gone down prematurely to their graves.

But the cause remained firm during the ordeal. The poorer material came out without the dross, and the choicer spirits gathered in closer union on the advanced ground. The result proved the wisdom of the movement. It gave the reform strength and power, and proportionately weakened the enemy. In the bar-rooms and shops the opposition to the new pledge was the fiercest. Rumsellers were indignant at this most fanatical crusade against their "living," and infatuated customers grew eloquent in descanting about the liberties fought for by their fathers of the revolution. The cry of fanaticism was rung upon all its charges, and some well meaning ones joined in the general crusade against the wild scheme of total abstinence. Muddled wit poured its lowest wrath of slang phrases upon the fanatics. Nowhere were there so many tears shed over the mad movement as in the dram-shop circle.

"What do you think of this new cold-water movement?" asked Counselor Skillott of Doctor Howard.

"What movement? — the new pledge?"

"Yes, the total abstinence, as they call it."

"It meets my hearty approbation. Does it not yours?"

"I can't say it does."

"Why not?"

"O, it's fanatical in the extreme. It is an ill-judged move, and will most certainly ruin the tem-

Digitized by Google

perance cause. It is the result of zeal without knowledge."

"How will it ruin the cause? Isn't temperance right?"

"O, yes; temperance is a good thing. I'm a temperance man; but this is carrying things too far—men will not go it."

"Will total abstinence injure a man? Do you know of a man who would be injured by taking and adhering to the abstinence pledge?"

"Ahem — it would be well enough for drunkards, but men of mind and moderation will not bind themselves to, or countenance so unreasonable a scheme. A moderate glass will hurt no one. Because men abuse a necessary beverage, it is no reason why all should discard it entirely."

"Should friends of temperance recommend for the drunkard that which they will not themselves put in practice? Should men whose appetites do not control them, and consequently can make no sacrifice, hesitate to countenance a measure which is the drunkard's only hope? You speak of a 'moderate glass.' Is it the first glass which makes the drunkard? Are they not all moderate drinkers on the start? If there were no moderate drinkers, would there ever be any drunkards? As to the abuse of it, Mr. Skillott, I take higher ground. From the light of science, I affirm that its moderate use is an abuse. It is an element of discord and derangement in the whole animal economy, and an injury to every man in health."

Digitized by Google

"But that it is good as a medicine, you will not deny."

"And so is arsenic. But, because men may take the one for a medicine, would it be expected that he should become a habitual user of it in health?"

"But is n't it needed in cold weather?"

"Never! I could point you to those in this neighborhood, whose drinking habits were anything but beneficial in cold weather."

"But men kill themselves with axes and knives."

"Very true. But did you ever hear of their forming morbid appetites for the use of them,—becoming murderers or suicides from whittling or chopping cord-wood?"

"But," continued Skillott, evasively, "sober men will not go the total abstinence pledge — it would be an acknowledgment of their fear of becoming drunkards."

"You petitioned for a permit to keep a *dice table:* was it because you wished to become a gambler?—or for the *benefit* of others?"

The thrust went home, and Skillott declared himself abused, and entered his office. As Howard passed the tavern, a number accosted him from the stoop about the new cold-water trick. Among others, Hermon assailed him, and charged him with slandering him at the meeting the night before.

"How, Mr. Hermon?"

"By saying that all the tavern-keepers were enemies of temperance. I am as much of a temperance man as you are."

Digitized by Google

"Ha, ha!" answered Howard, looking Hermon steadily in the eye.

"What are you laughing at, sir?" asked the latter, evidently nettled.

"At a temperance man's peddling rum to drunkards!"

"You *lie*, sir! I never sell to drunkards."

"But sell until they *are* drunkards, and then turn 'em out for Shimer to finish!"

"I want you and the rest of your crew of fanatics to understand that I do not wish any man to become a drunkard."

"But still engage in the only business that makes drunkards!"

"It's false! You are always slandering me."

"Mr. Hermon, was there ever a drunkard in this community before your tavern was started?"

"Then you would say that *I* made 'em all!"

"*Who did?*"

"It was their own doings. I only sell as I have a license to do."

"And if you had a license to teach theft, you would not be responsible for the thieves you made, would you?"

"But you can't make your total abstinence business go down in this community. People won't submit to it. It will ruin the temperance cause."

"That's a (hic) —fact," stuttered a poor ragged object at Hermon's elbow. "Will roo–o–in the t–(hic) the t'hemperance cause."

Digitized by Google

"Better ruin that than to ruin *men*," coolly answered Howard, looking upon the reeling creature.

"He (hic)—he abuses us, don't he Miz-zer Her-Hermon?"

Howard was determined to cut deeper, and continued:

"You complain because I stated that there was no safety in the old pledge to the drunkard—that not a rumseller in town would refuse the reformed man a glass of beer if he knew it would send him back again to his old habits."

"I do. You state that which is not so."

"Did n't you let Miller have beer, knowing his appetite for liquor, and that it was a trap to make him break his pledge?"

"Who says that?"

"*I* say it!"

"It 's false, I tell you. What is a man good for if he can't stand a glass of beer? He no need to have drinked it."

"But you saw him teazed until he *did* drink it, knowing that the liquor once down, the man could not control himself; and then you let him have brandy, and boasted that you knew he would n't stick."

"What business is that to *you*, if I did," growled Hermon, with ill-suppressed excitement.

"It 's my business to denounce the act as most devilish. It shows your hypocritical love of the *old pledge* and of temperance. An infernal imp might

Digitized by Google

blush to see a man plotting another's fall and then rejoice in the ruin."

"It shows all the honesty there is to your temperance men. They can't keep from drinking."

"Hermon, you are a cool, brazen-faced scoundrel, and richly deserve hanging for the death of Miller. If his spirit don't haunt you, it will be because it will shun the den where the body was slaughtered."

"Who says Miller is dead, you black-hearted fanatic?"

"I say so. I saw him die this morning, and his death dates from the trap you and Skillott set to heap ridicule upon the temperance cause."

"And because men will make fools of themselves, you would deprive me of an honest living?"

"Deprive of the power to plunder community, and destroy your own neighbors — that 's all."

"You 're an abusive knave! I believe you would joy to see me a pauper. It 's all of a piece with your new schemes to ruin honest men."

"You may as well be a pauper as to make paupers. A pretty temperance man, and prating too about the old pledge! Not a drunkard has fallen who does not owe his ruin to you and your co-laborers in ruin. You smile while preaching temperance and offering our reformed men *beer*, knowing all the time that one glass is their ruin. It all convinces me that our new pledge is right; for a reformed man should not only shun all that can intoxicate, but the very place where the accursed poison is kept. There is no safety in the

Digitized by Google

associations of men who are so utterly base and heartless as to work the ruin of one who would live and die a sober man. God deliver us from such fiends, and keep the reformed drunkard from their accursing influence. Hell knows no blacker depravity than that which would drag a fellow again to degradation, or a more rascally falsehood than their pretended temperance. Satan was as much a friend of human happiness when he slimed into Eden. The very threshold you stand upon, Hermon, is smoking with blood, and for the universe of God, I would not have on my hand the stain of such guilt as is on yours. *You know what you are doing.* You know that the old pledge is worthless, and that you rejoice in seeing it broken. I once petitioned for your license. If God will forgive me for that, I never will commit so great a sin again. So long as you sell rum do not brand yourself as an unblushing liar by continuing in the business of making drunkards." The words poured in a torrent from Howard's lips as he stood close to Hermon and hurled them in his ear. His manner was so fierce and impetuous, and his words so scathing, that the landlord of the "Home" was apparently awed into silence, and strode sullenly back into the bar-room.

"Some of these temperance fanatics will get so crazy that they will set everybody by the ears. If I should abuse a man as Howard has me, I should not blame him if he should *burn my barn!*"

The crowd d' ' not notice the look that passed be-

Digitized by Google

tween Hermon and one of his customers. That night Howard's horse-barn was burned, horses, carriages, and all; and in the morning the incendiary was tracked to Hermon's shed, where the wretched creature was frozen, having crawled about half-way under the shattered stable-door.

Every rumseller in Oakvale stuck zealously for the old pledge. If the temperance people had abided by that, they could have gone with them! The new pledge was intolerant and fanatical, and would most assuredly ruin the cause! And these men, who opposed the first movement as "going too far," were now its mourning friends. As for Counselor Skillott, he *knew* the whole thing was originated by priestcraft and fanaticism, and so did n't join the society.

Among others who frowned upon the new state of things, was Elder Snyder. Indeèd, the first had met his stately and scornful displeasure. The wicked and the ungodly were admitted as members, and he could not associate with such. Atheists, and men who had been drunken, and those who made not long prayers nor wore sanctimonious faces, had been allowed to sigh both pledges. Those who did not attend his church, nor pay their money to support his ministry, could not receive the least countenance from him.

At a donation party given to the Elder by his friends, and held at his house, the subject of temperance was introduced and discussed. Walter Brayton went so far as to ask the pastor to put his name to the pledge. Looking upon the young man with a solemn

Digitized by Google

frown, he drew himself up, and in his usual sanctimonious drawl, gave his objections:

"Young man!—I awfully fear you do not know what you are doing. You and your temperance friends are going after strange gods. You seem to think yourself wiser than your teachers. You are most assuredly led away by the blindest fanaticism, and great evil has already come of it. Hatreds and jealousies, strifes and contentions, have entered into the hearts of my people. Satan has certainly to do with these strange and wicked doctrines. You ask me to sign a pledge not to drink any wines or spirituous liquors at all! The world, my friends, is coming to a strange pass, when we must totally abstain from the good gifts of God. Temperance is a moderate use of all his bounties. We are required by the Bible to drink wine. The Saviour himself made and drank wine. It is designed as a blessing to man, and it is the will of our Lord that we enjoy it. We are not responsible for the abuse which ungodly men make of these things. Men are gluttons—and shall we abstain from all food? Men are hypocrites—and shall we discard the religion of our Lord and Master? There is no authority in the Bible for these societies. I cannot saction what has not a "thus saith the Lord" for it. Ungodly men are in this movement, and the pious Christian should set his face firmly against it. He who is within the ark of safety needs none of these foolish helps. If it is the dear Lord's will to have some of the souls he has created lost in the abuse of

Digitized by Google

some of his good gifts, it were wrong for us to contravene his purposes. His holy will be done. Those he has chosen will he save. A moderate use of his bounties is good for all. Let us give thanks."

And over the table glittering with decanters and glasses the false teacher craved a blessing, and the wine went round. The Elder seemed to pride himself upon watching those to whom it was presented. There were few who refused the cup, and the contents produced a marked flow of good feeling. Hermon was present, and at once became a pattern of piety, and donated to the Elder with extreme liberality. Brayton and Howard refused the wine, and there were half-smothered titterings about "cold water," "fools," and "fanaticism." Minnie welcomed the cup with an emphatic *no*, which drew the attention of the company around her; but, save a slight flush, she was calm, and returned the reproving glance of the pastor with dignity and firmness. Back of her stood one who had not yet attracted notice. As the waiter came to him he fiercely put it away with his hand, and drew himself up, looking upon the wine with a strangely wild and glistening eye. His person was full six feet in height, his countenance sharp and pale, his hair long, and his eyes deeply sunken and intensely brilliant. He wore a long surtout coat, closely buttoned, had on a broad-brimmed hat, and in his hand a long staff.

"*No!*" he fairly howled through his clenched teeth. "Away with the sparkling devil! It bubbles

Digitized by Google

with damnation! It is the red blood of butchery! It is the fiery beverage of hell! The tempter is coiled at the bottom! '*At last it stingeth like an adder and biteth like a serpent!*' It shall sting to utter ruin the hand which hands it this night with the mockery of a blessing craved upon it! I say, get thee gone, devil, or the arm of the Lord shall smite thee!" The strange personage raised his long staff, and would have fiercely dashed the cup in fragments had it remained before him.

"Who thus intrudes here so noisily?" asked the Elder, pale with anger.

"The chosen of the Lord—the avenger of the slain! Blood cries from the ground, and the widow and orphan beg for bread. Woe! woe! for the Mighty One is after ye! Hypocrites, false teachers, gluttons, and wine bibbers, woe! for the end cometh! Men are led astray by wicked ones in priestly garb, and the innocents are wailing for bread in the land. The wrath of God kindles against ye for the violence in the land, and shall consume ye as stubble! Woe! woe! woe! I say, ye workers of ruin! It is written against ye in blood, and God shall avenge the fallen! *Away!* I tell ye, with the beverage of the damned! Thus I will smite thee as the Lord smote the wicked of old, and will smite them again!"

Whirling his long staff with an almost supernatural power and velocity, he stepped towards the sideboard, and with an eye red and glaring, and a voice swelling into a howl, with one tremendous swoop,

Digitized by Google

dashed every glass and decanter into a thousand fragments. Astonishment was upon every countenance, and there was not a whisper in the room until a wild, maniac-burst of laughter came back from the strange apparition as he emerged into the street.

Paleness lingered upon the lip of Elder Snyder — the paleness of anger not unmixed with that of awe. The stranger was a personage not to be forgotten, for his tones had a startling energy and power. The company did not recover from the influence of the incident, and soon dispersed.

Among those who were present that night, was a reformed man by the name of Whitney. From the lowest depths of drunkenness he had come up, and by industry and unblemished good conduct had given promise of redeeming the position he had lost in society, and of living a life of future usefulness. His family were again comfortable, his children at school, and he prospering at his trade. He had united with the Methodist church, and by his exemplary deportment won the full confidence of its members. He had that night been for the first time within the reach of the fatal circle of the glass. The gurgle of the liquor and its foam, with the solemn sophistry and example of a Christian minister, combined to undermine his integrity. Beautifully the incense rose up before him, and as Snyder himself presented the cup, he impulsively grasped it firmly and drained it off. A smouldering fire was kindled. A wild glow shot through every vein, and within his stomach the demon

Digitized by Google

was aroused in his strength. Whitney had but one thought — more drink! That he must have. The desire burned within him. It crept to his fingers' ends, and out in a burning flush upon his cheek. He writhed helplessly, and the large drops stood thickly upon his brow. He felt as if already fallen—a guilty wretch—and shrunk cowering from the gaze of every eye.

"What is the matter, Whitney?" kindly asked Brayton, as he passed him in going out. Whitney started as if from a nightmare, and glared silently at vacancy. Snatching his hat, he rushed out with a half-sad, half-exultant yell, and sped down the street into Hermon's.

"Drink! drink! for God's sake give me drink! *Quick!*" and the trembling wretch turned with a ghastly stare at the door, as if dreading the approach of some one, his hands fastened convulsively upon the slats before the bar.

A devilish smile crept over the swollen visage of Hermon, as he saw who it was who begged so madly for drink. Hesitating a moment, as if enjoying the struggles of the victim, he sneeringly asked:

"That you, Whitney? I thought you was a temperance man! What'll the church say? But I s'pose you will drink *moderately*," and he smiled more fiendishly than ever.

"Drink! I say; give me drink. Money, soul, clothes, tools — everything for one drink! Give it to

Digitized by Google

me, quick!" and the poor maniac emptied his pockets upon the counter, and pulled off his coat and hurled it into the bar. His eye gleamed and kindled as he glanced upon the shining bottles, and his voice was choked and husky, he constantly begging as though his whole system was on fire.

Brayton and Howard entered just as Hermon set the bottle on the counter. Whitney heard their footsteps, and convulsively grasped the bottle and tumbler and turned it full, and in his eagerness spilled as much more upon the counter.

"Whitney! in God's name, what are you doing? Hermon! more of your devilish work!" said Howard, rushing up to the bar and arresting the arm of Whitney. But the latter was too quick for the movement. Grasping both hands fiercely around the glass, he dropped his mouth to the rim, and turned the contents off at a breath, shutting his teeth with a spasm as he did so, breaking the top of the glass in pieces, and spitting them on the floor. With a long, deep breath he drew himself up to his full height, and dashed the bottom full in the face of Howard. The yell that followed the act was horrible.

"You thought to keep me from drink, eh? I'll have it if I have to go to hell after it! Who–o–*oop!* Won't Father Merrill roar when he finds old Whitney's born again! I'm your boy to say amen, Doctor!" and with drunken laughter he commenced a bacchanalian song, and danced wildly around the

Digitized by Google

room. No words from Howard or Brayton could touch him; and he fiercely repelled all efforts to lead him from the tavern.

"Better have him sign the pledge again," sneered Hermon, from behind his counter.

"Black-hearted, murderous villain!" groaned Howard from between his teeth, as he reached in vain for the landlord over the counter. "You deserve hanging most richly. None but a devil in human guise would thus exult in such work. I did not dream that earth had such monsters as you!" The Doctor stood glaring upon the sneering landlord, who wisely kept out of his reach.

"*And he will hang yet*, for the avenger will overtake him in such an hour as he knoweth not. He is both a curse and accursed, and so shall hang clear of the earth." All within the room started at the sound of that voice, and beheld the strange man with the long surtout and staff, steadily gazing upon Hermon. The sneer upon the face of the latter faded away under the basilisk gaze, and a chill strangely crept over him — the voice was familiar, and stirred unpleasant memories.

That night the spirit of another fallen one went where rum is not. As the water was let upon the wheel of the grist-mill the next morning, it made a few revolutions, and then with a crushing sound ceased to turn. No effort with poles and hooks could remove the difficulty, and the water was let out of the dam. Crushed in among the broken buckets was a

Digitized by Google

corpse, the head, shoulders and arms left unbroken. Erect as in life, the bloated features of Whitney glared out, and the dripping hair lay closely upon the bloodless brow.

As the wife and children, too soon hearing of the affair, came wailing to the scene, and fell weeping over the wet and bloody remains, Hermon turned and slipped away.

"*The murderers are not all hung yet!*" was hissed close to his ear. He started, but dared not turn to look, for he knew his tormentor.

With a heart full of keener anguish than even the wife, Minnie Hermon attended the funeral of Whitney. The sermon was from these words, "*Where is thy brother?*" She felt that poor Whitney had died by her own father's hand, and every sob from the widow and the orphans added keener pangs to her own bitter anguish.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXIII.

LIGHT IN A DARK PLACE.

Among others who sold rum in Oakvale, was a man by the name of Jud Lane, one of the most reckless and unprincipled of his class. He kept what was called the "Lower Tavern," a low and disreputable den, by the river bridge. The building itself was a miserable structure, answering for a grog-shop and gambling den. The boards were off the shed, the floor of the stoop rotten, and falling away, and one end of the upright part settling down with age and decay. The sheeting was loose and clattering, the windows dirty and broken, and the door worn and begrimmed with dirt. The bar-room looked as though it had never been cleaned. Dirt and tobacco spittle was thickly crusted upon the floor; the wooden bars before the windows were greasy and cut up with the knife, and the old brick fire-place was crumbling away. A long seat reached from the old-fashioned oat-bin to the door, well worn by the groups which had for years there set and displayed their slavering wisdom. An old wash sink stood in the corner, slimed over again and again by dirty drippings, surmounted by a washbowl marked inside with a circle of the more plentiful ornamenting. Upon the roller was a

Digitized by Google

napkin to match. A huge boot-jack hung over the mantel, together with circus bills, sheriff's sales, and auction or patent medicine placards, "sold here." The bar was one of the old-fashioned kind, with a picket work and double door. Gringy kegs, decanters and a bottle of stoughton, with candy in a seven-by-nine glass case, completed the bar-room furniture of the "*River Hotel.*"

Jud Lane was a man worthy of a moment's attention. He was a licensed agent of the government, dealing liquors in that old shed by the authority of law. He was hardly of medium stature, but thick set; his features harsh and repulsive, hair matted, and concealing a low and retreating brow, eyes of a muddy bronze color, nose flattened, neck thick, and lower jaw heavy, arms long, and legs crooked to deformity. With hands thrust deeply into his pockets and hat drawn down over his eyes, he moved backwards and forwards across the floor. His whole aspect was most villainous, indicating the inner man in palpable and revolting language. None of earth's unfortunates was ever too degraded to be turned away from his bar. The vilest of rum's shattered wrecks crawled regularly into his den for the dram. The wife or the child would never have thought of entering his door to protest against his course with husband or parent. His mouth was an ever-active crater of the most vile and malignant cursing. His own sister's husband had drank, and died a horrible death in his bar-room. Still more abandoned and malig-

Digitized by Google

nant as the reform came into notice, Jud Lane presented the perfect embodiment of a callous, cruel and revengeful rum-dealer. He would rather sell rum and slaughter his fellows, in the *River Hotel*, than live elsewhere honored and respected. His boys were like him, playing the most abusive tricks upon the poor wretches who lingered there for their drams.

Election day had drawn to a close, but crowds still lingered to drink and carouse. Jud Lane's tavern secured a large number of votes, and the election had been held there. At night, the bar-room was densely crammed with people, swaying, singing, shouting, cursing, drinking, and now and then fighting, the dim light revealing an atmosphere loaded with the mingled odor of tobacco and rum, reeking like a poisonous stench from the lungs of the drunken mass. The jingle of glasses was incessant, and at the hour of midnight, tipplers and drunken men still lingered. The bunk and the space under the bench, the shed and the hay-loft, were stored with drunken men. Such is the material out of which partisan leaders manufacture the "popular will," and slime into public stations.

Five hard-looking customers were still drinking at the bar, alternating with a song or a story, by one of the number. One of them was a middle-aged man, slightly gray, and not entirely unprepossessing in his appearance, save the bloated face and the dirty suit of rags. He was a leader among them, and displayed talent in his drunken sallies.

Digitized by Google

The subjects of temperance, and the meeting appointed for the morrow evening, came up.

"I'll treat the crowd, if you'll all go, boys, and carry your bottles and give 'em *beans*," said Lane, cool and sober in the midst of the general drunkenness.

"Done," said Barney Kits. "H—ot wa-(hic)-ter agin cold. Set on the top-hetchel. Old Barney's on earth in spite of rum and lightning."

"I'll treat again, if you'll *egg* that long-haired cuss who is round preaching on the corners of the streets, and find the tools," continued Lane, bitterly. "Catch him on my steps!" and he ground his teeth as he crushed the sugar in the glass.

"A shilling to the man who hits him!" distinctly muttered our strange friend in the long hair and surtout, as he emerged from the darkness of the street and stood in the middle of the room. The noise was at once hushed, and Lane scowled with angered surprise.

"The long haired hypocrite will be there to-morrow night. Bring your eggs, Jud Lane. A rotten cause and a rotten heart must need rotten arguments. Bring 'em along, and also those you prey upon.

"Out of the house, you black-coated devil," growled Lane, but keeping safely behind the bar. Halton, put him out — poker him out."

Halton, the man in rags, seized the stranger at the word, and was proceeding to put the command in execution, when the latter, with the ease with which he

Digitized by Google

would have taken a child, unhanded Halton's grasp, and looked him sternly in the eye.

"Henry Halton, I knew you when you were one of the most honored of men. There is yet manhood and pride in your heart. I know there is. This is not the place or the company for you. You did not look thus when you stood with Mary Densmore at the altar. A spell is upon ye! Come away, Henry Halton, from this vile place, and be saved. We will meet you half-way, and there shall be singing and rejoicing for the prodigal's return. Your sainted mother and wife are looking down from Heaven. Angels are weeping, Henry, and at home, [the stranger whispered as he breathed the words into Halton's ear] the only being who loves you on earth, weeps and prays for her father. Your friends *are not here*, Henry Halton! Go with us and be saved. Be *saved*— Henry Halton, be *saved!*"

The lustrous and melting eyes worked a strange spell over the hardened drunkard. As a tear from the stranger's eye fell upon the open palm, Halton wept, and a sigh swelled up in his broad bosom. Still in the stranger's grasp, he looked imploringly in his eye, as if hope was springing up in his darkened heart.

"*Will you come*, Henry Halton — come to honor and to God? Say this night you will, and there shall be rejoicing in Heaven! *Come!*"

A strange scene in the dimly lighted bar-room of the River Hotel! Drunkards were looking unstead-

Digitized by Google

ily but silently upon it, and from behind the bar, where the last round of glasses stood untasted, glowered Lane with clenched fists and teeth upon the stranger.

"Halton! tarry not among the tombs. *Come!*" he continued.

"*Before God I will!*" gasped Halton, as a deeper sigh escaped his bosom, and he ventured to look around him. As his eye rested upon Lane, he quailed, so fearful is the influence of the dealer upon his victim. The stranger saw it, and continued:

"Who else is there here this night who will come with Henry Halton to home and manhood, and God? Come with him this night, and be enslaved ones no more. Turn from the past." And the stranger, in low but strangely sweet and thrilling tones, commenced and sang "Long, Long Ago." The drunkards wept, and as the question was again asked, "Who will come with Halton?" four of them reeled up around him, joining hands to keep from falling.

"And here you solemnly pledge yourselves never to drink anything which can intoxicate again.

"We–(hic)–we do."

"And may God help you! Now," thundered the stranger, a wild and joyous light kindling in his eye, "come away, and tarry not, nor look back, or the enemy is upon you? *Come!*" and the five customers of the "*River Hotel*" went out after the strange man in the long surtout.

With a torrent of curses pouring from his mouth,

Digitized by Google

Jud Lane turned the liquor in the glasses back into the decanter, and walked his bar-room like a maddened fiend, gnashing his teeth, and swearing vengeance upon the temperance fanatics, and the five customers in particular. "They would'nt get no more liquor from *his* shop, if they choked to death;" and yet the man's only consolation in his anger was, that they would all be back again before the week was out.

—Desolate was the foul den, with only the snoring drunkards left; and Jud Lane went cursing to bed.

The next morning, Jud Lane looked confidently for the coming of his five customers for their usual morning drams. He knew no passion but those of avarice and hate, and he raved when he was cheated of a customer. Skillott came in while Lane was sullenly pacing his bar-room. Skillott had become an habitual tippler, and to disguise his habits he would range through the whole list of drinking places, and drink at them all. Lane rehearsed his grievances to a sympathetic listener. Both heaped abuse upon the temperance people. As to the five drunkards who had been led away by that long-coated hypocrite, both hoped they would choke to death before they could find a drop.

"But never 'mind; you 'll have 'em, Lane, before the week 's out: nothing to trap 'em."

"Get 'em here again and I'll sweat 'em. I'll learn 'em to leave an old friend for these cussed fanatics. I'll sue every mother's son of 'em, or my name ain't Jud Lane."

Digitized by Google

"Do they *owe* you?" pleasantly asked Skillott, taking his lips from the glass he was emptying, and brightening up at the thought of a fee.

"They do, every one of 'em; and I'll have my pay or jug 'em."

"You 've *jug'd 'em* pretty well already," put in old Barney Kits, who had just dropped in for his dram.

Lane turned upon the inveterate old joker with an angry frown, but smothered the usual torrent of oaths as the old fellow put down his sixpence.

"It would be but justice," continued Skillott, with assumed indifference. "They have had too many favors to turn against you, and they certainly cannot complain if made to pay their honest debts."

"I've always been doin' 'em favors, and lettin' 'em have liquor when they had n't any money. If they don't quit their foolin' I'll fix 'em, d——n me if I don't. Jud Lane knows where to bite."

"I expect Brayton and Howard will have them lecturing on temperance before Saturday night," said Skillott, with a sneer, ready to heap ridicule upon the temperance movement. "They'll make strong men! —ha, ha!"

"Not while Lane's liquor is in 'em," gravely answered old Barney; "too much pump water."

"Kits, you old bloat! have n't I warned you to stop your devilish stuff? I won't stand it."

"I can't stand either, half the time, such stuff," replied Kits, winking waggishly at Lane.

"You must n't turn off any of your jokes on me."

Digitized by Google

"It 's a long *lane* that has no turn," persisted the half-drunken wag. Lane was maddened, for he took the drive as made at his hump back.

"You ought to be shot, you old viper!"

"Just been shot — in the neck. 'T ain't (hic) — mortal, though;" and old Barney attempted to stand steady and look wise.

"You drunken old cuss! you 'd better join in Halton's gang, you feel so sharp."

"Been one of Halton's gang this five years. Expect to ——

"Hear ye! hear ye! hear ye! men and women of Oakvale! The trump of the Lord is sounding, and the dead are coming forth. Ho! ye enslaved ones! Men having devils and dwelling among the tombs: there is hope for the lost. An arm mighty to save is stretched forth, and deliverance is near. Hear ye! hear ye! the good Samaritans are among you. Those who have been among thieves shall be washed and healed. Drunkards who have squandered all in riotous living, and hungered for the husks fed to the swine: we bid you return. There is bread enough and to spare — hallelujah to God! and there shall be singing and rejoicing in the land, for the lost are found. Ho! dwellers in the dark places! Come forth. The commissioned of the Lord bringeth you glad tidings. He will break your bonds and bid the captive go free. Drunkards! come out from the dens of prey. Let the licensed buzzards starve for the want of human carrion. God's judgments are close

Digitized by Google

upon them, and sure and swift destruction upon them and theirs. Ho! ye that thirst, come! I come to bear you the holy truths of the temperance reform. There is light in the dark places, and the waste ones are made glad. The gospel is preached to the poor, and the blind ones are made to see.

"We 're coming, we 're coming, the sober and free,
Like the winds of the desert, the waves of the sea;
True sons of brave sires, who battled of yore,
When England's red lion roar'd wild on our shore.

We 're coming, we 're coming, from mountain and glen
With hands that are steady — we 're freemen again;
Let Alcohol tremble as 't ne'er trembled before,
For we swear by Great Heaven to drink it no more!"

Jud Lane fairly raved when he recognized the voice of the man in the long coat. That personage had mounted the horse-block by the sign-post. There was something strangely wild in his person and manner. His tall form was erect, his hat off, and his long hair swaying in the wind. With one hand upon the staff and the other extended with the long finger quivering, his eye half tender and half fierce, his coat buttoned to the throat, and his beard hanging upon his breast, his aspect was singularly striking and impressive. His voice was in keeping; now tremulous with a tear, and again rising into a wail, or howling with terrible energy, as his invective, unequalled in bitterness and strength, fell fierce and scathing upon all connected with the rum traffic. There was awe in

Digitized by Google

his impassioned and hazardous eloquence, and beams of unearthly light seemed literally to shoot from his eye when he towered in passion. With clenched teeth and burning cheeks, the dealers shrank from his gaze and blistering speech. Clear and swelling like a trumpet's tone, his voice rang out and crowds gathered to hear and to see him. There was something unaccountably fascinating in his half-mad harangues. His sneer, when pouring sarcasm upon the dealers, was as withering as the sarcasm itself. But when he appealed to the drunkards, a smile like sunlight would melt every feature into wondrous beauty. Step by step the crowd, drunkards included, would gather closer to the man, as if drawn by some unseen power. Even Jud Lane could not keep from looking from the hall out upon the speaker. With all the severity of the man's speech, and the bitterness of his personal assaults, there was blended a world of truth and tender, moving pathos. He never spared the dealer, nor even gave them credit for a single redeeming trait. It seemed to delight him to lance them without mercy. From appeals of the most gentle and mournful earnestness, he would turn, as his eye caught sight of one of them, and, as if startled by the sound of a rattlesnake, hiss sweeping imprecations upon them and their business, between his clenched teeth and pallid lips. He believed himself commissioned by the Lord to "smite the monster" in his strong places. Some secret and unknown cause of hatred to the rum traffic and those employed in it, with wild

Digitized by Google

religious frenzy and deep natural enthusiasm, gave his impetuous eloquence, and with reason, the cast of fanaticism. His denunciations of wine bibbers and drinking church-members and priests, were bold and merciless.

Jud Lane had just come in for a blast which blistered as it reached the raving victim. Turning to a drunken Irishman, the landlord offered him a gallon of rum if he would go around between the shed and the house and hurl a dozen of eggs at the speaker. Pat was just drunk enough to eagerly agree to the proposition. The "crazy preacher," as he was called, had just finished the two verses we have quoted, and the melody of the wild and stirring air yet lingered in the hearts of the crowd, when an egg crashed against the sign-post close by his head. A freezing sneer crept over his face as he turned his eye in the direction from whence the missile came.

"Ho! ho! friends. Here are arguments upon the other side of the house. Better send us their eggs than their liquor. If the wretch who reared this post would smear it with human blood instead of yolk, the argument would be better put and more appropriate. Blood is upon their sign-posts, their thresholds, and their counters. It is upon their hands and their hearts. But vengeance is mine, saith the Lord, and the widows' and children's wrongs shall be avenged. Ha, ha! another of their arguments, and applied to a subject, too. [The egg hit old Barney.] But better on your coat, brother, than the man's poison in your

Digitized by Google

heart. The monsters writhe, for their power is departing from them." There was a shout from the boys, and a crash of boards under the shed. In stepping back from the shed window, as he hurled the second egg, Pat trod upon a short board and fell through to the ground.

"And so shall the traffic fall to the ground, and those engaged in it. Their *arguments* cannot sustain them."

The fall was a serious matter with Pat, for he had broken an arm and a leg, and was groaning with pain. The preacher was quickly by his side, and without assistance bore him into the bar-room. Jud Lane stood cowering like a spirit of evil in his bar at the turn things had taken and the comments freely made by some in the crowd. It was in his heart to turn the whole company out of doors. Pat begged for rum, and while the preacher was after Howard, Lane drew a glass and carried it to him, but as it was lifted to Pat's lips, the long staff of the Hermit, as the preacher was called, swooped down and dashed it into fragments.

"Away with your poison! A broken arm and leg are enough. Hand him rum at your peril, Jud Lane. Before God I will serve you as I have the glass. Stand back!"

Stooping down, the Hermit again lifted Pat in his arms, and bore him out and away from the "*River Hotel*" to Howard's office. As he came out, he again addressed the crowd who followed, making effective

Digitized by Google

use of the circumstance. Jud Lane had made Pat drunk; Pat had fallen and broken his limbs in consequence, and the people must support him through his sickness. Shaking his long staff towards Lane's tavern, he broke forth in a torrent of fierce invectives. As he saw Skillott taking notes of his remarks, he turned his attention to that functionary, and lashed him in unmeasured terms. He then announced that a temperance meeting would be held in the Hall that evening, to be addressed by a reformed drunkard, and urged all to attend. Then breaking out in the familiar air of "Come to the Temperance Hall," he passed through the crowd and up the street. Upon the steps of the "*Home*," and so through the whole village, he went with staff and song, and impassioned harangue, heralding the meeting and denouncing the rum traffic. His vast muscular strength and glistening eye deterred the enraged dealers from an open attack upon his person.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

THE OLD MAN'S STORY.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXIV.

WASHINGTONIANISM — THE OLD MAN'S STORY.

THE tide of the new movement was rising with unexampled velocity and power. From the very dens of the enemy, the Washingtonians came forth, fully armed and fired with enthusiastic zeal. From the ranks of the enslaved, reformed men came forth and became for the time the standard-bearers of the reform. The song, and the rude though earnest appeal, with the dark details of personal experience in the thraldom of ruin, assumed a deep and thrilling interest, and crowds flocked to hear the story. From gutter, hovel, den, and steaming pit, men came forth to soberness and honor. In every community the flame was kindled. Angels were found sitting at the graves of men's drunkenness, and as the stone was rolled away, the living came forth to happiness and home. The land was filled with rejoicing. The wife and mother watched the commotion with prayers and hopeful tears, and the citizen looked bewildered. An angel was in the waters and lepers were healed. Many believed that intemperance was to be driven at once from the land. The rumsellers — such as continued in the business — became more reckless and desperate than ever, and only rejoiced when those who

Digitized by Google

had taken the pledge were decoyed again to destruction.

Oakvale was alive with the excitement, and its dealers boiling with fear and rage. The Hermit had planted some tremendous blows upon the enemy, and had snatched away many of their best customers. His announcement of the evening meeting had increased the interest to the highest degree, and before dark, crowds of people were pouring down the streets to the Hall.

Groups of people gathered on the steps of the taverns and saloons, and were drinking in the bar-rooms to keep their courage up. Now and then a drunken man came reeling out of them, and the coarse jest and boisterous laugh told the character of the parties.

Monsieur Ladeaux, an old Frenchman, kept one of the most frequented dram-shops in Oakvale. Everything around the establishment was arranged admirably to render it attractive and inviting. Politicians made the "Alhambra" their nightly resort, and at its bar the extremes of society met in the fraternal circle of tippling.

Our readers may have seen the counterpart of Monsieur. He was stoutly built and fleshy, his neck thick, features coarse, heavy and sensual, person stooping, and a shambling, leaning gait, like a man looking for a penny on the walk. His soul was not like other men's souls. He was as senseless, save in his pocket, as the pavement on which he trod. But two emotions — those of avarice and gluttony — ever

Digitized by Google

stirred his sluggish nature. Honor, conscience or pride, he was an utter stranger to. He deemed men, women, and children, his legitimate prey. Whatever he could do without fear of fine, imprisonment or hanging, he would do for money. Had murder been licensed, he would as readily butcher all who crossed his threshold. No good interest in community ever received his attention, countenance, or a farthing of support. He was never known to exhibit feeling, save when his interest was assailed. The boy that reached tiptoe for the cent's worth of beer, was just as welcome a customer as the citizen of mature years. Had every one who went out from his rooms fell dead in the street, his regrets would have been in proportion to his loss of custom. Moral influences fell as inefficiently from his mail of animal selfishness, as they would from the Pagan idol of wood or stone.

Among those who were drinking on the evening of the meeting, was a young man of about twenty-three years. He was a mechanic in the place, and without friends. None had yielded more blindly — madly to the bowl, or plunged more deeply into its many iniquities. With quick and pungent wit, a voice of wondrous sweetness and compass, and a power of mimicry unsurpassed, he became the ruling spirit of the drunken revel. His liquor cost him nothing. A song, or a speech, or a story, would always bring both applause and liquor. There was quite a competition among the dram-shops for his presence.

Digitized by Google

The youth was but a wreck. His potations were deep and incessantly poured down. His face was of a fiery red, and his long hair coarse and matted. A soiled and broken-down hat sat back upon his head with a dare-devil manner, his pantaloons begrimmed with dirt, and his boots running over at the heels, and full of holes, the bare, stockingless feet exposed to the weather. The ragged coat was buttoned to the throat, indicating a lingering pride which tried to conceal the utter absence of a shirt. A dirty comforter was wound loosely around the neck, and the ends tucked under the coat. The people in the saloon had just put him upon the counter, where he was making a temperance speech. His wit, inimitable drollery, and ludicrous flights of burlesque eloquence, had put the crowd in a roar. Those present had furnished Gault with a bottle of rum, and were calculating upon a high time at the temperance meeting, for he had promised to make a speech there. In the height of their mirth, Brayton, Halton, and the Hermit entered. As many bombs would not have produced a greater impression upon the customers of Ladeaux.

"Come down, John Gault, we want you to go with us. We'll do you good."

"This will do *me* good, H–(hic)–Halton." Gault tipped up his bottle, his eye turning comically down upon Halton. Then thrusting his tongue into his cheek, and rolling one eye up one way and the other another, a trick he was familiar with, he assumed a theatrical attitude, and exclaimed:

Digitized by Google

"Come one, come all; this *bar* shall fly
From its firm base as — as soon as — hic — h'i."

A few tittered, but hushed again, as the low and thrilling tones of the Hermit's voice trembled like winning music above the coarser sounds. Gault stood like one fascinated under the appeals. Slowly the extended arm and bottle lowered to the side, and with the other on his hip, he stood leaning forward and gazing into the eye of the Hermit. The latter had extended his hand, and his eye rested full and searchingly upon Gault. Save Monsieur Ladeaux, all were hushed as the strange man plead with the drunkard. There was a tender melancholy in his tones which charmed the roughest listener. Gault was as completely in his power as if bound by a spell.

"Lost!" he exclaimed, with a sigh, and plunged forward into the arms of the Hermit.

"*Saved!* John Gault! We will snatch you from the very jaws of the enemy. Your friends are not here, John Gault. Go with us. We bid you come. You shall sit among the redeemed, clothed and in your right mind. Come!"

Gault trembled from head to foot. Skillott ventured to question this summary way of forcing men into the temperance movement. With a gesture of scorn, not unmixed with dignity, the Hermit waved the counselor back, and again urged Gault to go with them. Brayton stepped forward and took him by the arm. While he was hesitating, the Hermit sang a verse—

Digitized by Google

Sadly my wife bowed her beautiful head,
Long ago, long ago;
Oh, how I wept when I heard she was dead,
Long ago, long ago;
She was an angel, my joy and my pride;
Vainly to save me from ruin she tried;
Poor broken heart! it was well that she died,
Long ago, long ago.

The words, feathered with plaintive melody most sweetly sung, went to the heart of Gault. His young and lovely wife had just gone to her pauper grave, injured and broken-hearted, leaving him alone to go more rapidly down the road to ruin. A tear swam upon his red lid, and dropped upon the cheek. Another and another followed. Gault was conquered. Clutching the Hermit firmly by the arm, he yielded to his guidance, and with Brayton and Halton behind, passed out of the Alhambra.

The more ignorant expected fun; but Skillott saw the strong influence at work upon the drunkards, and was troubled. In his political dreaming, he had calculated much upon their cheaply bought suffrages.

As the four entered the Hall, they found every part of it densely packed with people, and the throng still pouring into the vestibule. As dense as was the crowd, it opened both ways before the Hermit and his long staff, and with Gault, Halton and Brayton in his wake, that personage strode down towards the platform. Gault shrank back, however, and Halton procured him a seat and stood beside him. Large drops of sweat stood thickly on Gault's face, and he

Digitized by Google

avoided every eye as much as possible, where he sat. A sea of heads was constantly turning towards the doors to catch sight of the speakers. Elder Snyder stole in around the wall aisle, and took his seat behind a pillar under the gallery, as if doubtful of the propriety of attending such a meeting. For an hour the crowd continued to pour in, still finding room to stand. In the corner seats were a number of rum-sellers and their friends, they having heard that John Gault was to carry a bottle and address the meeting. The more intelligent ones looked grave, the brutes scowled, and the simple put on a knowing leer, trying to express their contempt of the whole affair.

Two men, at last, came in, and with much difficulty reached the platform. All eyes were fixed upon them, and that immense audience was hushed into stillness.

The men were unlike in appearance — the one being short, thick-set in his build, the other tall and exceedingly well-formed. The younger had the manner and address of a clergyman, a full, round face, and a quiet, good-natured look, as he leisurely glanced around upon the audience.

But the interest all centered on the old man. His broad, deep chest and unusual height looked giant-like as he swayed slowly up the aisle. His hair was white, his brow deeply seamed with furrows, and around his handsome mouth lines of decision, thought and sadness. His eye was black and restless, and kindled for the moment as the tavern-keeper nearest

Digitized by Google

him uttered a low jest aloud. His lips were compressed, and a crimson flush came upon and went from his pale cheek. There was a wide scar over the right eye.

The younger finally arose and asked if there was a clergyman present who would open with prayer. Not one answered to the invitation. The rumsellers ventured a titter. This started the Hermit. Advancing to the front of the stage, he looked steadily and not unkindly around over the audience, finally resting a less winning gaze upon the corner where the dealers had centered. Stretching his long arm out over the people, he broke forth in an invocation which was as appropriate as forcible and solemn. At its close, he sang an ode as none other could have sung it. Its melting tenderness stole over the audience like a dream, and prepared them for the truths to follow.

The younger speaker made but a short address — calm, dignified and appropriate, setting forth the claims of the Washingtonian cause, and urging all who wished well to humanity to join in it. At the conclusion of the meeting, he hoped to see the name of every one present appended to the pledge. As he concluded, he called upon any one present to speak — hoped to hear remarks for or against.

"Shut up, you old nuisance," muttered Jud Lane, as old Barney punched him to get up.

"Give 'em the dingbats — swear at 'em, Jud," whispered Barney.

All eyes were turned in another direction. The

Digitized by Google

pastor under the gallery arose with more than ordinary dignity, and attacked the positions of the speaker. He used the current arguments of those opposed to the temperance measures, and concluded by denouncing those engaged in them, as meddlesome fanatics, having zeal without knowledge — men who wished to break up the time-honored usages of good society, take the interests of the moral world out of the hands of the church, and injure the business of a very large class of worthy and respectable people. Simultaneously the dealers and their friends, and the aristocracy of the village applauded the pastor. As he took his seat he put his hair back with dignity, and looked over the room, as much as to say, "nothing for me to make that speech!" The feeling was evidently turning against the strangers, for Snyder had cunningly shaped his remarks to undermine the public confidence in their character as "public teachers." The very fact that one of them had been a drunkard was against him. And besides, a prayer had been made by one whom he did not recognize as a minister of God. He cautioned the people against being led astray by fanatics and false teachers.

The Hermit's eye flashed, and with a pale lip he grasped his staff fiercely. Slowly rising to his full height, he pointed towards where Elder Snyder had drawn his cloak around him, and broke out in a torrent of withering denunciation. So sudden and sweeping was the onslaught that the more timid had hardly time to be shocked before the last

Digitized by Google

barb had been sped. The manner of the man was terrible.

"False teacher!" hissed the Hermit between his clenched teeth, yet plainly heard in every part of the hall. "False teacher! and this from one who turned his own erring ones from his hearth, and sent them away with curses. One who himself taught his children to sip the accursed poison! One who has set an example which has sent his own parishioners to the grave and to perdition! One who, by the grave of two who died broken-hearted, still advocates the foul sin which destroyed them. One who prays for the poor and the needy, and at the same time casts his influence for that which robs the poor and needy, and sends out the children to beg for bread. One who would hedge Heaven against us because we have once sinned as he is this day influencing others to sin. One whose gospel never says to the returning penitent, 'Go and sin no more!' One who dishonors his profession by preaching our land full of paupers and felons, our graves full of dead men, and hell with souls that are damned! Go! false one! and preach the gospel of righteousness, temperance, and a judgment to come, or else the viper shall return to sting the hand that sends it forth, and the vultures shall pick the bones of him who stays the chariot wheels of the Lord!"

A chill crept over the whole audience. The manner of the speaker was even more bold and startling than his words. With his eye full upon the pastor,

Digitized by Google

he slowly retreated to the back of the stage and took his seat.

During the assault, the old man on the platform had watched the hermit with a kindling eye, leaning forward to catch every word. As he arose, his form, as tall as the Hermit's, and better proportioned, towered in most commanding dignity, and his chest swelled as he inhaled his breath through his thin nostrils. There was something grand and inspiring in the appearance of the old man as he stood looking upon the audience, his teeth hard shut, and a silence like that of death throughout the Hall. He bent his gaze full upon Hermon, who sat immediately before him, and as his eye lingered for a moment, the scar upon his forehead grew an angry red, and from beneath his shaggy brows his eye glowed with meaning fire. Hermon quailed under the gaze. He at last commenced, in low and tremulous tones. There was a depth in this voice — a thrilling sweetness and pathos, which riveted every heart in the Hall before the first period had been rounded. Immediately under the platform and a little in advance of the speaker, sat young Mortimer Hudson, manifesting an interest which he had never before exhibited at a temperance meeting.

"If I were a *stranger* in your village, I should dare to call you friends. As I once lived in your midst, I trust I may call you all so."

There was a sensation, and whispered inquiries of "Who can it be?" With a thrilling depth of voice,

Digitized by Google

the speaker locked his hands together, and continued:

"A new star has arisen, and there is hope in the dark night which hangs like a pall of gloom over the country. O God! thou who lookest with compassion upon the most erring of earth's frail children, I thank thee that a brazen serpent has been lifted, upon which the drunkard can look and be healed; that a beacon has burst out upon the darkness which surrounds him, which shall guide back to honor and to Heaven, the bruised and weary wanderer."

Strange, the power in human voices! The speaker's was low and measured; but a tear trembled in every tone, and before they knew why, tears were dropping in the audience like rain-drops. The old man brushed one from his own eye and continued:

"Men and Christians! You have just heard that I may be — probably am — a vagrant and fanatic. I am not. As God knows my own sad heart, I came here to do good. The graves of my kindred are here. My childhood was spent here. My manhood was destroyed here. Hear me and be just.

"I am an old man, standing alone at the end of life's journey. There is deep sorrow in my heart, and bitter tears in my eyes. I have journeyed over a dark, beaconless ocean, and all life's bright hopes have been wrecked. I am without friends, home or kindred, on earth, and look with eager longing for the rest of the night of death — without friends, kindred or home! It was not so once!"

Digitized by Google

No one could withstand the touching pathos of the old man. The audience was under his control.

"No, my friends, it was not so once. Away over the dark and treacherous waste which has wrecked all my hopes, there is the blessed light of happiness and home. I grasp again convulsively for the shrines of the household idols that once were mine, now mine no more."

The speaker seemed looking away through space upon some bright vision, his lips apart, and his finger extended. The audience involuntarily turned in the direction where the speaker was looking, as if expecting to see some shadow called before them.

"I once had a mother. With her old heart crushed with sorrows, she went down to her grave. I once had a wife; a fair, angel-hearted creature as ever smiled in an earthly home. Her eye was as mild as a summer sky, and her heart as faithful and true as ever cherished a husband's love, or clung to him when fallen. Her blue eye grew dim as floods of sorrow washed out its brightness, and the loving heart I wrung until every fibre was rudely broken. I once had a babe, a sweet, tender blossom; but these hands destroyed it, and it lives with One who loveth children. I once had a noble, a brave and beautiful boy; but he was driven out from the ruins of his childhood home, and I know not if he yet lives.

"Do not be startled, friends; I am not a murderer in the common acceptation of the term. I am guilty of much, but there is light in my evening sky. A

Digitized by Google

spirit mother rejoices over the return of her prodigal son. The wife smiles upon him who again turns back to virtue and honor. The angel child visits me at nightfall, and I feel the hallowing touch of a tiny palm upon my fevered cheek. My brave boy, if living, would forgive the sorrowing old man for the treatment that drove him out into the world, and the blow which maimed him for life. God Almighty in Heaven! forgive me for the ruin I have brought upon me and mine!"

The speaker again wiped a tear from his eye. Mortimer Hudson watched him with a strange intensity, and with a countenance pale with strong and unusual emotion.

"I once was a fanatic, and madly followed the malign light which led me to ruin. I was a fanatic when I sacrificed my wife, children, happiness and hope to the accursed demon of the bowl. I was a fanatic when I broke the heart and sent to the grave the gentle being whom I injured so deeply.

"I was a drunkard! From respectability and opulence, I plunged into degradation and poverty. I dragged my family down with me. For years I saw my wife's cheek pale, and her step grow weary. I left her alone amid the wreck of her home idols, and rioted at the tavern. She never complained, though she and the children went hungry for bread.

"One New Year's night, I left the midnight revel at the tavern, for the hut where charity had given us a shelter. Deeply intoxicated, I reached about half

Digitized by Google

the distance, and yielded to the intense cold of the storm, and lay down upon the drifts, with the slumber of drunkenness and death upon me. My wife, a frail, poorly clad creature, had become alarmed about me, and ventured out in the storm to seek me. She found me, insensible with cold. She stretched her body upon mine, and with her own heat warmed the chilling blood in my veins, and saved me from freezing and death. Struggling until she raised me to my feet, she started me home, bidding me rest not for life until I reached home. Arriving there, I found the babe wailing in the arms of the boy, who was vainly attempting to hush it. I felt the demon in every vein, and snatching it from his arms with a curse, I hurled it upon the coals!"

The speaker buried his face in his hands, and the audience were wound up to breathless excitement.

"At the moment the mother came in, and like a tigress, sprang and snatched the child from its tortures. Its agonizing shrieks will linger in my ear while I live! I demanded food. Mary turned her gaze sadly upon me, the tears falling fast upon her cheek.

"'We have no food, James. And, merciful heaven! must murder be added to *starvation?*'

"That sad, pleading face, the streaming eyes and the wail of the babe maddened me; and I — yes, I — struck her a fearful blow in the face, and she fell forward upon the hearth. The furies of hell boiled in my bosom with deeper intensity as I felt that I had committed a wrong. I had never struck Mary be-

Digitized by Google

fore; but now some terrible impulse bore me on, and I stooped down as well as I could in my drunken state, and clenched both hands in her hair.

"'God of mercy, James!' exclaimed my wife, as she looked up in my fiendish countenance. 'You will not kill us. Poor Willie, he must die,' and she tried to soothe the little sufferer in its cruel pains. I could not bear the shrieks of the child, and became furious. Dragging her to the door and lifting the latch, the wind burst in with a cloud of snow. With the yell of a fiend, I still dragged her on and hurled her out into the darkness and the storm. With a wild ha! ha! I closed the door and turned the button, her pleading moans mingling with the wail of the blast, and the quick, gasping shrieks of the babe. But the work was not complete. I turned to the bed where my son had hidden, and dragged him out. He clung to my knees, and called me by a name I was unworthy to bear. My eye rested upon the axe in the corner, and I grasped it with the determination to kill him. The boy saw the act and sprang for a window, where a blanket was the only protection from the storm. As he sprang out, the blow I leveled at his head fell upon the sill, and severed his hand from the arm!"

The speaker ceased a moment, and buried his face in his hands, as if to shut out some fearful dream, and his deep chest heaved like a stormy sea. Mortimer Hudson had partially arisen, his countenance pale and ghastly, and he sobbing with startling emo-

Digitized by Google

tion. The old man shook as with an ague chill, and again proceeded:

"It was morning when I awoke, and the storm had ceased, but the cold was intense. I first secured a drink of water, and then looked in the accustomed place for Mary. As I missed her for the first time, a shadowy sense of some horrible nightmare began to dawn upon my wandering mind. I thought that I had dreamed a fearful dream, and involuntarily opened the door with a shuddering dread. As the door opened the snow burst in, followed by the fall of a hard body across the threshold, scattering the snow, and striking the floor with a sharp, quick sound. My blood shot like red-hot arrows through my veins, and I rubbed my eyes to shut out the light. It was — it — God, how terrible! — it was my own injured Mary and her babe, frozen to ice! The ever true mother had bowed herself over her child to shield it, and wrapped her own clothing around it, leaving her own person stark and bare to the storm. She had placed her hair over the face of the child, and the sleet had frozen it to the white cheek. The frost was white in its half-open eyes, and upon its tiny fingers. I know not what became of my boy."

Again the old man bowed his head and wept, and all in the house, Jud Lane excepted, wept with him. In tones of low, and yet far-reaching pathos, he concluded:

"I was arrested, and for months raved in delirium. I was sent to prison for ten years, but its tortures

Digitized by Google

were nothing compared to those in my own bosom. God knows I am not a fanatic. I wish to injure no one. But while I live let me strive to warn others not to enter the path which has been so dark and fearful to me. I would see my angel wife and child in the better land, where, God Almighty be thanked! no rum is sold, and drunkenness is not. If there is one here this night who has been as I have been, let me beseech him, as a brother whom I love, by the dark and beaconless past — by all that is yet left amid the ruins of the present, and all that man can hope for in the future — let him *come and sign the pledge*. He shall again stand up in the dignity of a freeman, be loved by his family, respected again by society, and honored of God. Come, ye heavy-laden and weary, *sign and be* FREE!"

The old man sat down; but a spell as deep and strange as that wrought by some wizard's breath, rested upon the audience. Hearts could have been heard to beat, and tears to fall. At the invitation to sign the pledge, the Hermit stepped forward and sang, "When is the time to sign." The effect upon the people was deepened, and as Halton and his four companions stood up, side by side, and with right arms raised, followed with "We 're free once more!" the people swayed and murmured as if under a breath of electricity. The men were all well known, and as they now appeared, presented one of the most eloquent appeals ever witnessed of the blessed effects of the temperance reform.

Digitized by Google

"FREE AGAIN!" shouted Halton, his form dilating with hope and pride. "Free again! Hallelujah to God! we 're men again. Would that all who drink were as we are."

"There 's a balm in Gilead and a physician there. The Lord is here; come, come to the waters and be healed. Now is the time!" Wild and thrilling, the searching tone of the Hermit reached over the crowd.

The old man had stepped down in front of the platform, where a table and writing fixtures had been placed. He was followed by Halton and his companions, and the Hermit; the latter still holding his long staff, and his pale features lit up with a smile of lofty enthusiasm. The speaker took the pledge, and asked who would be the first man to put his name to the "great charter of freedom. He hoped all would do it. The drunkards of the land were looking to their action that night. *Come!*"

Young Hudson leaped over the railing, and eagerly snatched the pen. As he held it a moment in the inkstand, a tear fell from the old man's eye upon the paper.

"Sign it before God! Sign it, young man. Angels in Heaven would sign it. I would write my name there ten thousand times in blood, if it would restore me the loved and the lost!"

The young man, long known as a hard drinker, wrote *Mortimer Hudson!* The old man looked, wiped his tearful eyes, and looked again, his countenance alternating with red and deathly paleness.

Digitized by Google

"It is — no, it cannot be. Yet how strange!" muttered the speaker. "God help me now!" Clinging to the rail, he looked with terrible earnestness upon Hudson, as he slowly wrote with his left hand. "Pardon me, Sir, but that was the name of my boy — it is my own name."

Young Hudson trembled from head to foot. Slowly raising his head, and looking the old man in the face, he held up the right arm from which the hand had been severed. The two looked for a moment into each other's eyes. Both reeled and clasped in close embrace.

"My own deeply injured boy!"

"My father!"

Those were words enough. Their souls seemed to grow and mingle into one, in that long embrace. People leaped upon their feet to catch a better view of the scene, every face streaming with tears.

"Let me here thank God for this great blessing, which has gladdened my guilt-burdened soul!" exclaimed the old man. Kneeling where he was, he poured out his feelings in a prayer, which, once heard, never could be forgotten.

The spell was complete. The aisles and all the space before the platform were crowded with people eager to sign. The Hermit brushed a tear away, and walked nervously backward and forward, striking his staff sharply on the floor, while Halton leaned his head against the platform, and wept as a strong man weeps when overcome. But his tears were not all bitter.

Digitized by Google

During the commotion Jud Lane had wormed his way around to where John Gault had taken a seat, and prevailed upon him to drink from a bottle which he had with him. Then sending one of his crew forward with the bottle to place it upon the table before the platform, he offered Gault five dollars if he would go and claim it. The drink had made Gault himself again, and he was ready for the fun. Lane was mistaken in the effect which he supposed the bottle would produce. The impression of the meeting had been too deep to be ridiculed out of the hearts of the people. The speaker used the circumstance to advantage against the instigators: it was fitting, he said, that the dealers, or their representatives, [the bottle was black,] should be present, dressed in appropriate mourning garb.

The people lingered, loth to leave the Hall. Slowly working his unsteady course through the ranks of those who remained, John Gault was seen moving towards the table.

"Make way! Make way for John Gault," said Halton, helping to open a clear passage to the table. With a rocking gait the drunkard walked up to the group around it, but not to sign the pledge, as expected. Seizing the bottle by the neck, he put it in his pocket, and looking the elder Hudson cunningly in the eye, stammered:

"This bottle is mine. Render unto — C—æsar the things that — are (hic) *Cæsar's.*" The rummies ventured a titter, and, back under the galleries, a faint

Digitized by Google

clapping of hands. Hudson looked him steadily and sadly in the eye, and replied:

"True, John Gault, 'and to God the things that are God's!'"

The effect was electrical. Gault was foiled with his own weapons, and stood hesitating what to do or say next. Hudson then appealed to him in a manner which drew tears from every eye. He told Gault his past history, his degradation, and pictured a future, if he would sign the pledge, which was all bright with hope. Every word told. The drunkard first laughed, then listened, grew sad, and finally wept. In his rags, and reeling, with Halton to hold his hand, the name was rudely written upon the pledge. As he turned away in the care of Halton and Brayton, a poorly clad woman rushed down the aisle, and fell upon the drunkard's neck.

"John Gault!—my brother!" she sobbed, and swooned in his arms. The drunkard and his pauper sister were both borne to the house of Halton, where for a week true friends watched with Gault as he raved in the horrible tortures of *delirium tremens*.

During his ravings, the wretched man would have sold his soul for brandy. But his bedside and door were guarded by kind and faithful friends.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXV.

HIGH LIFE.

From the commencement of our reform to the present day, its opposition has been found in the two extremes of society. The so-called aristocracy of our land has sneered at its progress, and treated its claims with undisguised contempt. The rich and the fashionable have considered it vulgar to labor in the vineyard of our common humanity, and in the midst of their luxuries have given no thought to the desolations sweeping around the base of society. The toilers of the day have been gathered from the middle ranks, as a general thing — men of honest hearts and hard hands — men ardent in their sympathies, and bold and upright in action.

We venerate genuine aristocracy. We love the ring of the true metal. Its sympathies are never closed against the appeals of the lowly. There is a real polish — an ease and gracefulness in its manner, and a nobility in its action. It is the ascendancy of intellect and moral worth allied to fortune. It is not servile to superiors, or tyrannical and insolent to those beneath. It never answers the beggar with a taunt, or stares coarsely at an humble garb. It

Digitized by Google

does not depend upon a heraldry of tinsel. With its wealth, there are mingled the higher and nobler virtues, which add true and enduring luster to human character.

Our country is cursed with a base counterfeit. It comes not of old family names or honors. It is the creation of a day, and bears upon its ill-fitting garments the barren soil which gave it birth. It is redolent of the dunghill. Without heart, brains, or character, it thrusts its overgrown and unwieldy fists into kids, and takes an ungainly stride into fashionable life. It builds its claims upon the length of its purse, and seeks elevation by looking down upon those less fortunate and silly. It has no foundation but dollars, ignorance, and arrogant assumption. It knows no way of retaining a position but by treating the more humble with coarseness and contempt. It offers sickening, fulsome incense to its superiors, and heaps insult and wrong upon its so-called inferiors. Its manners have no more of the grace of the genuine article, than the snob the bearing of the gentleman. It is as much out of place in the drawing-room, as an ass in a deer-park. Its attempts at gentility are simply repulsive. Its men live and die, and the world is no better for their living. Its mothers teach their daughters to forget and despise all things useful. Its daughters are apt scholars, and live their worthless lives between the piano, pier glass, and men as silly as themselves. They thrust themselves forward as specimens of high life, upon means accumulated by

Digitized by Google

humble but honest toil. Their coat of arms should be the wash-tub, brick, saw, lap-stone or mason's hod, ever keeping them in mind of the honorable avocations which gave them the means to make themselves the coarse and pitiful counterfeits they are. More or less of this fungus is found in every community throughout the whole land.

Oakvale had its share. With the increase of wealth and population came the miserable element, which knew of no other mode of attracting attention than that of feeling, and assuming to be, better than all else. Independent in means, and caring not for the common weal, it stood aloof from, or openly scorned the temperance movements. To get drunk on wine, seemed one sure way of creating a distinction between them and those who would not drink, or who were content to imbrute themselves upon vulgar liquors.

This class of society have been unfortunate in being placed in a world where they come in rude contact with those who toil. And when misfortune and death sweep down the distinctions of earth, and consign the millionaire and the pauper to a common level and a common home, the worms know no distinction of persons. They feast as heartily under the towering marble as under the rudely-placed sod in potter's field. There is a Heaven where the lowly are crowned as proudly as the greatest of earth. The splendid coach, the wide domain, and the swollen wealth pass not the plebeian turf.

Great principles, in their progress, leave an impress

Digitized by Google

of their true character. Side by side their footsteps, evidence will arise upon either hand, remaining like landmarks to attest what their influence has been. Their effects upon the world pass into history, and remain forever as matters of reference.

The foot-prints of Christianity can never be obliterated. Broadly they are beaten by the herald's sandals in every clime. The blood of the martyr is a record which cannot be effaced. Wherever the Christian lives, and suffers, and dies, the light of Hope and Faith burns upward, and lights a pathway to a better land. The hope of salvation is as steadfast and cheering in the hut as in the palace.

Yet the great of earth welcomed not the humble Nazarene. They turned away from the travel-worn and weary pilgrim from Heaven. They saw not the glitter of a heavenly scepter in his dust-covered staff, or angel retinues in his humble companions. And so the great and the fashionable — those who looked for a Saviour with bannered host and golden crown, gave Him of Nazareth a crown of thorns, and spiked the manger-born to the cross.

But John preached the gospel which the Nazarene preached. He heralded not the coming of one surrounded by the great and princely of earth — its potentates and nobles of renown and lordly mien—a dazzling crown upon his head, scepter in hand, armed legions about him, and the imperial purple, — one who should move in pomp and splendor, and dispense honors to the great. But the dead should be raised,

Digitized by Google

the blind should see, devils should be cast out, the deaf hear, the lame walk, the sorrowing be comforted. and the GOSPEL BE PREACHED TO THE POOR! Blessed gospel!

Humbly, quietly, and unheralded by noise and pomp, the temperance reform made its humble advent. It was manger-born. There was dust on its sandals, and sadness upon its brow. It wept more than it smiled. It marshaled not the great, the rich and the fashionable — the titled aristocracy of earth. It came not to give fame to governors, statesmen, colonels, or millionaires. It plunged into the more humble strata, and commenced its holy mission of saving humanity. The dead were raised from the graves of their drunkenness, the devils were cast out, the blind were made to see, the deaf to hear, the lame to walk, and its GOSPEL PREACHED TO THE POOR! Blessed temperance gospel!

Thus came our reform. The Pharisees of earth have crucified it. But wherever it has been preached the evidences of its glorious character have been thickly scattered. They will stand when all else fades. Enough has already been achieved to reward the toilers of the work for an age of effort.

In Oakvale, the *high-life* influences were all leagued against the reform. Especially when the drunkards burst from their chains and sprang into the arena, did they turn sneeringly away. Halton, and a host of such men, had been redeemed, and their homes and families made blessed, but it mattered not. To go

Digitized by Google

into Washingtonianism would be coming down from their position, and becoming contaminated by a contact with the vulgar. The Fenton family, especially, took no pains to conceal their contempt of the meetings, speakers and speeches. Old Fenton, from being a canal driver, had become one of the "upper ten." A lucky prize in the lottery was the foundation of his fortunes. Subsequent speculations had made him wealthy; and by grinding the poor and "*breaking down rich*," he had retained his position in a community where there were enough to fawn and play the spaniel. The Fenton family could not be bettered, in their own estimation. At home, in the street, or at the concert, they made a studied attempt to show off their fashionable ill-breeding. When Minnie Hermon called upon Lettie Fenton to sign the pledge, she was answered with insult. She did not associate with poor and drunken people! Edwin Fenton was equally as ill bred as his sister, when called upon by Brayton and Halton. They, the Fentons, were in the reception of a great deal of fashionable company, and it would be vulgar not to furnish wine! It was well enough for drunkards to sign the pledge; they were weak-minded, and needed its restraint.

"If such people need restraint," retorted Halton, stung by young Fenton's insulting remarks, "I know of no one a more fit subject for the pledge than yourself, Mr. Fenton. I have been a drunkard; but I was first a *champagne* drunkard!"

The shot told, and Fenton turned indignantly away,

Digitized by Google

with the remark that the fanatics abused everybody, not even excepting Elder Snyder. But they were vulgar people. The young fop drew on his kids, and taking a glass of wine from the sideboard, passed out to call on the ladies of his acquaintance.

With but few exceptions, the reformers encountered the same reception from the so-called "first families." The excitement was intense, and the middle and lower strata of society were deeply broken as the wave rolled up from the popular heart, and swept onward with its freight of men disenthralled. Everywhere the subject was talked over. As in all other phases of the work, fault-finders were plenty; and wise ones, who saw danger and ruin to the cause in the headlong state of things. Even the very fact that Halton and his companions had reformed, was seized upon and used against the Washingtonian movement. High times when old drunkards were to come up out of the gutter and teach people temperance! The upper class would not be caught in the wake of such men. And there the upper class stood, cold, stubborn, immovable; presenting the strongest barrier between the evil and the reformers, alternately frowning upon, openly abusing, or sneering at the efforts made by the working men of the reform. They would rather than not have seen defeat overwhelm the humble class they despised.

"The impertinent hussy," said Ellen Belton, "to come here in her every-day duds, and ask us to sign

Digitized by Google

the pledge. She ought to be turned into the street. But some people never know their place."

"And her father one of the worst rumsellers in town, too!" chimed in Bell Belton, a younger sister. "Wonder she ain't ashamed of herself. Better ask *him* to sign it, I should think, the saucy minx."

"And don't you think, as sure as you live, she went to the counting-room and asked father to sign it!"

"Bless me! What impudence these people have. Shouldn't wonder if some old drunkard were next to burn up his distillery!"

"And Min Hermon wants us to go and hunt up all the miserable vagabonds in town. I wish folks *would* mind their own business! People like us sign the pledge and join a society of vulgar, drunken men! Indeed!" and the indignant lady flounced back upon the settee, and pouted in great anger. At dinner she learned that Halton and Brayton had actually called upon her father, and in a lengthy and warm conversation, dared, not only to ask him to sign the pledge, but to stop distilling. It was astonishing to what lengths these miserable meddlers would go. "But you did not do it, Father?" inquiringly asked both of the girls at the same moment.

"Didn't do it? Why, what are you thinking of? You don't suppose I am a fool, Bell? I'll see them all sunk before I will have anything to do with them. Stop my business, and all to please a set of brawling fanatics and reformed drunkards. Ha! ha! I had

Digitized by Google

ought to have kicked the meddlers out of the office. And to cap the climax, old Hermon's daughter came on the same errand."

"Did you ever!" exclaimed the daughters, in concert. "If that don't beat all! And she came here on the same errand; but we gave her enough to think about a spell. I'll warrant she will not be caught here again," and the queenly beauty tossed her head defiantly.

In the afternoon young Fenton called upon the Misses Belton, and the same matters were again introduced, and over their wine they there passed many a slant at the Washingtonians. The ladies laughed immoderately when Fenton told them that John Gault was to be sent out to lecture on temperance, and the fop drank his success in a glass of wine, with the remark that he would be brought home drunk from the first tavern he stopped at. He did not believe that one of the old soaks who had reformed, would stick a fortnight. But a good many of the young men were signing the pledge. Old Hermon's daughter was busy, and many a one did so just on account of her good looks.

"Good looks! Humph!" and Bell Belton looked in the pier glass before her, with an air of displeasure.

"Good looking for one of the common people," put in Fenton, fearing that he had offended the proud and jealous beauty. The approaching evening party was then discussed, and Fenton took his leave.

The "Arland House" was one of the most fash-

Digitized by Google

ionable in Oakvale. It was licensed, and its drunkards never went to the lock-up. Those only who reel in rags and live in huts, are put under lock and key for drinking a necessary beverage. The landlord of the Arland was a short, thick-set, grey-haired man of about forty years of age, affable in his manners and attentive to his customers. A forced smile always played upon his countenance, the very foot print of treachery and bad faith. He was not one of the malignant spirits, like Jud Lane, or the sullen and plotting ones, like Hermon; but he cared no more for those around him than for the horses in his barns. He was a jovial, hale fellow well-met, with his companions, but as destitute of heart when humanity plead, as the rock bathed in sunshine. His financial operations showed him a rascal in the full sense of the word. Even a brother rumdealer had come under his fleecing management to the tune of three or four thousand dollars. As one of the officers of a state institution, he had plundered the state of thousands. As a professed temperance landlord he had fleeced temperance people out of a fine sum, and immediately put in his bottles again and became more reckless than ever. Ashly would have sold rum with that ever-lurking smile, though an anthem of wailing went up around him. The same sneering, skeptical smile answered the whole battery of all the facts, and arguments, and appeals which had been brought out in the discussion of the reform. Over a tale of accident and suffering, he would weep; tell him that an

Digitized by Google

army of drunkards were being damned around him, and their families hungry for bread, and the same cold smile would answer as in the appeal for aid.

There was a fashionable and gay party in the rooms of the "Arland." The sons and daughters of temperance people even, were assembled at the dance. The better class, so called, of young men, were there. The wine went round, and all were merry. The Washingtonian matters, now everywhere the absorbing topic, were then discussed, and many a witty remark was made and laughed over. As the evening wore away the flow of mirth increased; and at the table, for fashionable people, it was uproarious. Young Fenton was running over with good feeling, and Bell Belton's sallies sparkled like the champagne she had drunk so freely of. The manners, stories, and expressions of the reformers, were all used with effect, and Fenton, with a false rig, gave a striking representation of the Hermit, as he appeared upon the stand. Bell Belton, dressed as Minnie Hermon, passed round the room with a champagne bottle and wine-glass, soliciting signers to the pledge. They had great glee over the term "upper crust," as used by Halton. An immense chicken pie had been prepared, with an upper crust ludicrously thick. At the head of the table, a small banner had been placed upon a walking stick stuck in a demijohn, labeled "high life." Under the relaxing power of wine there was many a thing said and done, which "vulgar" people in the lower walks would have blushed to do.

Digitized by Google

"Now for drawing a *picter*," shouted young Fenton, quoting the words and pronunciation of Halton as used in his rugged but stirring appeals. He entered the room with a hand-sled which he had found in the hall below, and, passing round the room, invited all to ride. "It is hard sleddin'," again quoting Halton, "but the people are moving, and we must clear the track. Who takes the first train through? Front seats reserved for the ladies!"

Wine had made the impulsive Bell Belton bold, and she promptly took her seat upon the hand-sled. One of the company placed a bottle upon the sled for steam, and another gave her a walking stick to scull with. Some one shouted "All aboard!" and rang the waiter's bell, and Fenton started, amid the wild mirth of the whole party, "drawing a picter," as he often announced, round and round the ball-room, stopping often to "wood up," as he expressed it, when drinking from the bottle upon the sled. Sober people, viewing the scene, would have blushed for shame. Bell Belton actually reeled upon the sled, and but for assistance, would have fallen upon the floor. Her cheeks were repulsively red, her eyes glassy, and her usually brilliant features wreathed in the sickly leer of—drunkenness! But the mirth grew furious, and not until Fenton gave out from exhaustion, was the repulsive spectacle ended. The landlord of the Arland had seen the whole from the door, and turned away with a more than usually broad smile, for he hated both the Belton and Fenton

Digitized by Google

families, and he knew that such conduct would strike keenly at home.

At a late hour, the party at the Arland broke up. A four-horse sleigh had been chartered to bring in and carry home the company. After much trouble and confusion, the village portion of the party was collected in the sleigh. Young Fenton was the last in, with a huge piece of cheese in one hand, and a half-emptied bottle in the other. He reeled, but was witty still, and his wild shouting pealed out in the night's stillness.

"Let's 'wood up,'" he stammered, as he clambered into the sleigh. Getting up on the back seat, he assumed a theatrical attitude, with bottle in hand, and in imitation of the Hermit, commenced a speech.

"Feller-citi-(hic)-zens! wo! wo! Ye that tarry long at the — the wine, ye that mix your (hic) your liquors! Ye that stir 'em in the (hic) —in the—the cup. They shall bite like a sar—arpent, and st–hing like a—like a— What's that other varmint?— like a (hic) — like a— the *devil*, my friends! Let me wood up, and — I'll — [gurgle, gurgle, from the bottle] (hic) "draw a picter."

"I'll draw *all* your 'picters,'" snarled the driver, shivering with cold, and he struck the leaders with his whip, and yelled out "go!"

Like a flash, Fenton was jerked from his feet over the hind end of the sleigh. He caught the cloak of Bell Belton in falling, and both went out upon the curb-stone together A shriek followed the boister-

Digitized by Google

ous ha! ha! of the revelers, as the drunken ones came to the ground; and as soon as the drunken driver could be operated upon, the sleigh was driven back, and the company got out.

Some of the upper crust was broken. Fenton's thigh and arm were broken. Miss Belton fell with her back across the curb-stone, and was taken up insensible, the blood oozing from her mouth and nostrils.

Halton had materials for drawing his pictures. Young Fenton was a cripple for life, and Bell Belton received so severe an injury in the spine that she never walked again. High life was brought low. Ellen Belton married a young man of fashion, who squandered her portion in drinking and gambling, and became a common sot. Old Belton, in a fit of delirium, plunged headlong into a well. One of the sons died of delirium tremens in his own house, chewing the flesh from his arms, and spitting it out with the froth and foam of madness. Another brother followed in a brief period. The last one lingered a few years, a miserable drunkard — was taken home from one of his drunken sprees, and soon died. A splendid marble shaft in the Oakvale church-yard, broken midway, impressively reads the history of the wealthy and talented male members of the Belton family.

They were people of fashion, loved their wine, and scorned the associations of reformed men. The reviled Halton lives to honor our common humanity, while *they* find a drunkard's rest under marble.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXVI.

CLEAN TICKETS — STICKING TO PARTY.

The sweep of Washingtonianism was broad and marked throughout the country. With searching power its tide plunged down among the darker currents of society, and ebbed back with trophies upon its bosom. The deepest, darkest craters of the evil were penetrated, and their infernal fires extinguished. The peaks and the base of society were lashed by the storm. Borne up on the exultant crest of the wave, were the bruised and the broken, their filth and rags fresh upon them as they came from the hut and the reeking alley. Each in turn became an apostle of the new doctrine, and in turn they went out and preached the tidings of their redemption. The shackles fell from more than one hundred thousand captives, and there was one united, grand anthem of singing and rejoicing for the cloud of returning prodigals which darkened the pathways to the Washingtonian shrine. Like the storm in a summer day, the reform came up in a clear sky. Society was gashed by the torrents which quickly gathered and pressed onward, lifting away from habit and prejudice the high and the humble. The storm has passed by, and the channel's

Digitized by Google

bed is nearly dry. The force has been spent. There are flecks of verdure blooming here and there; but the rest is dry and parched, and the death-fires of the plague have licked up unnumbered trophies which cost many a tear, kind word, or pleading prayer. There is hardly an altar reared by the original Washingtonians, upon which the flame then kindled now lingers.

The careful observer could have foretold the failure of the movement to eradicate the evil. Like an angry surge, it hoarsely thundered around the walls of the old Babylon. It left the mark of its force where it struck, but the hoary battlements remained in their strength. It could not be otherwise. They were based upon law, and a hedge of legislative enactments bristled in unbroken strength. The government interposed its all-powerful arm, and the traffic, under the ægis of its protection, smiled in security and scorn. As the flushed legions of the reformers recoiled from the stronghold, impregnable to their moral weapons, thousands despaired and deserted. An amnesty of offences was everywhere declared by the enemy. Others were left alone, exposed to the treacherous sally, and went down in the unequal contest. "Torn but flying," the reform banner could only be planted where it could flout the emblem of legalized piracy, or at times be borne by forlorn hopes again and again to the breach.

As the enemy has slimed his retreating way from one position to another, the trail has ever been fol-

Digitized by Google

lowed up by the beleaguering hosts. The last strongholds have been reached. The capitol was besieged and flooded with petitions. The mighty evil took the alarm, and leagued with party interests. Vanquished by argument in the council-chamber, it rallied at the ballot-box. There the unholy alliance turned for the last hand-to-hand conflict. There, at the fountain-head of a people's power, legislators of the right complexion were to be annually created, and the traffic thus sustained and perpetuated at the capitol. Against this union of party and law, the reformers were asked to quietly use their moral weapons. They were to be content to labor for the salvation of the drunkards made by government; casting their suffrages for the perpetuation of the evils of intemperance, and at the same time content to *petition* for their removal. They might have thus toiled forever. Their efforts would have fallen as far short of arresting the tide, as the sunbeam which lingers upon the sweeping surface of Niagara.

The extent to which parties have been disciplined, has proved a curse to our country. The right of suffrage has been most basely prostituted. Unscrupulous demagogism has for years controlled our elections. Politics, in the common meaning of the term, have become as corrupt and foul as rum and intrigue can make them. Honesty in political management is not known. "All is fair in politics," is the basis of action. The very heart of the country has been corrupted, freemen bartered like cattle in the market,

Digitized by Google

or led like bound slaves, and their suffrages swindled away for less than pottage. The caucus system, and the means for the consummation of its frauds, have bred the deepest corruption in the public morals. Honor and virtue have become objects of hissing and scorn. From the sacred precincts of home, the citizen has plunged for years into the blighting maelstrom of the "sweat-pit" debauch. The more honorable man in common intercourse, becomes a liar and a knave in the intrigues and swindles of electioneering. The accursing element has reeked at the church altar. Its foul and bestial breath has mingled with the hollow prayer; its hand, stained with the leprous pollutions of the rum-treating carnival, has desecrated the broken body of Christ. From the Sacrament the political recreant has gone out to buy votes with rum, and drink with the boisterous and vile. Moral and religious principles are alike sacrificed to secure personal or party aims. The sot and libertine has slavered on the bench, and the embodiment of dram-shop ruffianism stalked, through the controlling machinery of party deception, into the senate chamber. Everywhere, men whom justice would honor with dungeon and shackle, have wormed into positions of emolument and trust. Our elections have dishonored the country and its people — elevating the unworthy to power, and sapping public and private virtue. The ballot-box has been used as the most potent engine of the profligate and abandoned, the purchased mercenaries of the dram-shop and

Digitized by Google

brothel disfranchising the citizen who has a stake in society, and sending their own appropriate representatives to legislate for, or administer the laws of the country.

The caucus system has been the main-spring — the controlling power of this evil. It has placed the political helm in the hands of the unprincipled few. Cliques of village demagogism have led the masses for years. The machinery is set in motion by two or three at the capital, or the county seat; it reaches the smaller fry in the towns, and all delegations are packed at an early day. The same influences control the nominating conventions; on motion, all is declared unanimous; public opinion in high-sounding resolutions, is put before the honest yeomanry, and the nominees are before the people. A corrupting fund, under the false name of a *printing* fund, is then assessed on the candidates, the taverns are subsidized, and the strife commences. The open purchase of votes by money, or the gambling for them in the groggery, are the only means depended upon by the party. The press lends itself to the demoralizing work. The most exemplary citizen is transformed into an angel of darkness, and branded with all things infamous, while scoundrels by profession and practice, if on the "regular nominations," are as falsely transformed into prodigies of integrity, purity, and moral worth. Under such a state of things, honorable men have shunned the caucus, where the worst portion of society controls and manufactures the "popular will."

Digitized by Google

They shrink from nominations when their inmost lives are fastened upon by the fiendishness of the party press, or of the bar-room blackguard, and torn piecemeal into shreds. A foreigner, visiting this country in the height of an exciting political campaign, would at once determine that both parties had selected, as the candidates for their suffrages, the vilest class they could hunt out from the depths of scoundrelism. A day of drunkenness, riot, profanity, and revolting revelry has closed up the plan of operations, and the patriot cheek reddens with hot shame at the wide-spread dishonor, as well as shudders at the foot-marks of the plague which is preying upon the morals of the country. Deeper than pit-marks, the cancer eats at the heart of our institutions.

In Oakvale, party feeling ran high. Each party had established a press, and the columns of each paper teemed with low and scurrilous abuse of the opposition. Bar-room demagogism echoed the assaults. Rum and slang were the standing batteries. So powerful and corrupting were the operations — the discipline of party — that those who would not be seen in the bar-room, would furnish funds to imbrute their neighbors and cheat them of their suffrages. "All is fair in politics," was the motto; and the church-member and moralist closed their eyes with the villainous reflection that, as the opposing party did, so they were justified in doing.

As the more sagacious of the temperance people had carried on the struggle, they had learned the fact

Digitized by Google

that the rum interest was the great lever of party demagogism, and that there was a close union between party and the traffic. To be available, a candidate must stand favorably with the liquor people. If obnoxious to that class, he was either cut down in caucus or convention, or stabbed at the election. The liquor interest was ever consistent, and at the polls voted for its men, regardless of party. Hence the determination of parties to always mould their nominations so as to secure the support of the dramshops. As light broke in, there were murmurings at the tyranny of party bondage. It bound men in dishonoring slavery. It chained them to the service of party, however repugnant to their sense of honor. Galley slaves, chained to the party oar, they were compelled to toil to sustain the very evils which they were sworn against. Shoulder to shoulder with rumsellers and their bloated minions, honorable men, as members of party, were compelled to support those who were deadly opposed to the great cause they professed to love. Thus boards of excise and legislatures were annually created of men who were sworn enemies to the temperance cause, by those who were its sworn friends. Thus blindly and fatally were men held in thrall by the magic influence of party discipline!

The impracticables, or radicals, of Oakvale, had already given the party demagogues trouble. While they contented themselves with declamation in the church or lecture room; with adopting resolutions or the compilation of statistics, no trouble was appre-

Digitized by Google

hended. The war of words amounted to nothing, so long as they "stuck to party" and kept the temperance question "out of politics," voting steadily in utter violation of all their professions. The party leaders were all "just as good" temperance men, especially before elections, as men could be; but it would prove the ruin of the cause the moment its misguided friends dragged it into the political arena. It was too holy a cause to be thus destroyed! And so these men continually whined forth their hypocrisy. At the same time they were unblushingly plunging into the deepest corruptions of bar-room electioneering. But party attachments were strong, the better people blind and easily duped. Even at this day, many boast that they never "split a ticket!" which is equivalent to saying that they have voted for the most vile and profligate of men, merely because put in nomination by *their* party conventions!

Oakvale had its share of demagogues. They were loud in their professions of regard for the people, and ever eager to serve their country in a public capacity. From the higher position to the most menial, there was a hungry pack of petty office-seekers, stooping to every trick to secure popular favor. Some important measure was made the pretext for their wondrous zeal, and the masses were appealed to annually to rally against the phantom danger.

Skillott was one of the most crafty, as well as one of the most unscrupulous. He had a saint-like countenance, and a honeyed phrase for all. He was easy

Digitized by Google

in his manner, and well calculated to win favor. But a blacker heart than his never beat in human frame. Fresh from the brothel or the drinking and gambling saloon, he would rub his hands, and in gentle speech talk to temperance men of the value of sobriety, and to Christians of the sublime truths of the Bible. He would converse for hours with the pastor on religious or moral subjects, or as readily find congenial spirits in dens of vice amid the clink of glasses, with the ruffian or the wanton. With a cat-like pace and meek countenance, he pursued his way towards the goal of his ambition.

There was another who must not be forgotten. He was a prominent member of the ——— church, and had made loud professions of temperance and religion. He had left his old political friends at an early day, and joined the ascending party, accepting its crumbs with eagerness, and becoming one of the most determined advocates of —— principles. His pew in the church was never empty. From the avails of fat offices, he gave liberally to the church and the pastor. He was a devoted Christian, and was anxious to give as far as he was able, to the cause of religion! He agreed with all people. As he waxed fat at the public crib, he became valorous of his services to the party, and constituted himself one of its pillars. Men owed their nominations and elections to this potent calculator! He could figure out a result with unpretending ease, and always predicted the result, — after it was known to a certainty. He loved the temper-

Digitized by Google

ance cause. With its most radical friends, he was radical; with the half-way friend, he was half-way; with the drinking man, he was liberal; and, though a temperance man, did not object to others doing as they pleased; to the dealer, he was bland, nodded and winked knowingly, sneered at those who were ruining the temperance cause, and at elections called up the rabble and treated them. The other party did so! When he was up for an important office, he chuckled over his tact at swimming between the two interests. In the bar-room he avowed himself a temperance man, and threw down the five dollars to treat the company! *He* was perfectly willing that other people should exercise their own opinion in such matters. To the temperance men he whined about persecution, and thought, as he had always been a temperance man, they ought to "turn in" and sustain him. His position in the church was used for the same purpose, and as falsely. From the church he passed to the groggery. He would descend to the lowest haunt. He would drink with the vilest, or furnish money to inebriate a score in the "sweat-pit," where voters were manufactured the Sabbath before election. Barrels of beer, and crackers and cheese, were placed at eligible localities before elections, to secure suffrages. And Mr. Dobbs, at the same time, most bitterly lamented the course of those "hot-heads" who were determined to drag the temperance cause into politics. He was as much of a temperance man as any one; but he could not coun-

Digitized by Google

tenance any such folly. The "cussed fools" [Mr. Dobbs never wore his religion across the church threshold] would destroy all the good that had been done in spite of all he could say or do. In the Alhambra he reiterated his grievances over Cogniac and fried liver.

Walter Brayton had somewhat cooled in his temperance zeal. The canker of political ambition had entered his heart, and he gave his hopes to the attainment of political distinction. He dreamed not of the pitfalls which lay in his path. And upon such men the allurements of political life win like a charm — stealthily but strongly binding the better impulses, until the victim is blindly led a slave to party.

Skillott was a keen observer of human nature. He had discovered the weak point in Brayton's character, and formed his plans accordingly. He hated the talented lawyer with a deep and unyielding hate. He now plotted his ruin with the coolness of a savage, and proceeded to weave the web around his powerful rival. Skillott was, too, politically ambitious. He would secure the aid and influence of Brayton, bind him to his interests, and ruin him in the process. It was a bold plan, and fatally consummated, as the sequel will show.

With smiles and kind words, and an earnestly expressed interest in his welfare, the crafty counselor commenced his approaches. They were coolly met at first. But words were dropped where they would reach Brayton's ears. Tools were found to join in the

Digitized by Google

plot. Ere the victim had seen a mesh, the fire had been kindled in his heart, and the light of its false glare had secured his attention. But for these new feelings, he would have seen the change in his acts and sentiments as a temperance reformer. One excuse after another came readily to his mind; and ere six months had passed by, Walter Brayton's voice was hardly heard upon the platform. Many a true friend mourned this change, but could not account for it. The Washingtonian interest flagged, for a strong man had been bound, and the enemy came in like a flood. Many a poor wretch gave way when Walter ceased to nerve by his presence and trumpet peals. Walter found himself looking with less repugnance upon men whom he had so strongly denounced. The temperance meeting was almost entirely abandoned. When he did attend, some unworthy excuse was formed to rid himself of the call of the audience. Skillott courted his company, and cunningly infused more poison into his mind. Once drifting away, there was danger of an utter wreck. He was invited to political gatherings, and called out in addresses. His eloquence was popular with the masses, and the incense of popular applause proved grateful to the new master which had so suddenly sprung up full grown in his bosom. He became a leading spirit in political campaigns, and saw open before him a career of much promise.

—Walter Brayton was drifting from his better moorings!

Digitized by Google

There was one friend who had watched Walter's course with all the anxiety of her deep and changeless love. She had listened to him while he plead the wrongs of the drunkard, and loved him for his uncompromising opposition to the traffic. Against the bitter words of her father — and he seldom spoke otherwise than bitterly to her — she had defended Walter. Hermon had sworn that Walter Brayton should never marry a daughter of his — he should die first. Minnie had turned away from the infuriated drunkard and wept in secret—not so much at what the madman said, as at the deep ruin which his habits had brought upon him. She had also found trouble in the new associations of Brayton. She instinctively shrank from Skillott. That instinct told her that there was danger in his stealthy tread and glittering eye. The lawyer had said but little to her, but there had been something in his manner which she loathed and dreaded. She had noticed his intimacy with Brayton, and she foreboded evil from it. She felt that the crafty and unprincipled man was no friend to Walter. There was some evil design concealed under his assumed friendship, and she determined to watch every movement with a jealous eye.

Walter seldom spent much time at Hermon's in the company of Minnie; it only subjected both her and himself to abuse from the sullen and revengeful landlord. Of late he had seen her less than usual. Although her love for him had been tried, even in the ordeal of tears and blows, doubts of her truth had

Digitized by Google

been planted in his mind. The evil seed had been carelessly sown by an evil hand, and, in spite of all she had been to him, was taking root. As the new mistress, Ambition, won his attention, he more readily became distrustful of the other. With devilish cunning, Skillott had dropped expressions in Walter's hearing which lingered and rankled, and grew with the food they fed upon. Even her night pilgrimages of mercy — going out in the depths of the night to dispense her charities, so as to escape the abuse of her father—were artfully colored into whispers against her. Often, on such errands, she was accompanied by the Hermit. Skillott put on a look of sadness as he carelessly alluded to the matter, regretting that so fine a woman as Miss Hermon should be so strangely fascinated by that artful man. Their movements in the night were for no good purpose, he *feared*. And the fearful influence of Skillott had so soon been woven around Walter, that he listened to such things without a word of rebuke!

—The night darkened around Minnie Hermon!

Late in the summer there was an announcement made of a temperance meeting, which produced no little excitement. John Gault was to speak. Like a meteor, his name had shot up into the sky. His fiery eloquence had kindled an excitement wherever he had been, and people everywhere were on the tip-toe to hear him. The press, in spite of its subserviency to the rum power, had awarded him the highest posi-

Digitized by Google

tion as a natural orator. The people of Oakvale heard and doubted, yet were anxious to judge for themselves.

Minnie had, late in the evening of the meeting, while returning from some of her visits, met Walter and Skillott in company. The latter excused himself, and passed on with a smile, leaving Walter and Minnie to cross the street to the Home, in company. She asked Walter if he was going to the meeting, to which he returned an evasive answer.

"And why not?" she frankly inquired, looking closely and familiarly in his face. He stammered out some excuse, and turned to go.

"Walter!"

The tones of her voice, now deeply earnest and sad, arrested him. She hesitated a moment, choking back a sigh which struggled up from her heavy heart.

"Walter! what strange spell has been thrown over you within the last six months? Your acts, your smiles, your words are not like yourself. Why do you shun me lately? Tell me, Walter! what have I done to merit it? It is sad indeed, if, in the sore troubles that thicken around me, *you* are to turn away. Walter Brayton, you are the soul of honor and truth, and I conjure you, tell me the reason of all this. If new troubles have come upon you, let me know them as you once did. My own are bitter enough, God knows; but I have a heart to feel for those of—of—my friends."

Minnie choked and kept down the endearing term

Digitized by Google

which came up for utterance. Walter's cold and altered manner repelled the warmth of love which with her knew no change.

Like a culprit, Brayton cowered as her words fell upon him like thongs. There, before her, his manhood told him that she was all that he had ever been happy to dream her; and the first generous impulse prompted him to tell her all, and to ask her forgiveness. Then came between him and her the cold, sneering image of Skillott, and the promise of a high political position at the coming election. He felt that he had wronged her, and he ungenerously hunted for a justification of his course. He was too proud to acknowledge his error. Minnie continued to urge an explanation.

"Walter, I shall urge you no more. I am not ignorant of the source of your cruel suspicions. Your mind has been poisoned. You have taken an enemy — remember, Walter, *an enemy* — to your bosom, and he will sting you, fatally, I fear. Once you would not have listened to a whisper against Minnie Hermon. You believed her all that was pure and worthy. But friend after friend of the drunkard's daughter turns away. To lose one I have so leaned upon, is harder than all. But it matters not. With a brand upon me, I cannot expect the noble and the good to remain steadfast. *Walter Brayton!* [and she breathed the words close to his burning cheek] I know all. One year ago you would have crushed the viper who would have breathed aught against me. Frank as I

Digitized by Google

ever have been, I now say, with a heart breaking under this last blow, I absolve you from every vow to me. I will not stoop to counteract the poison of one who is an enemy of us both. I would yield my life for you, Walter, but I never will defend myself from slanders lodged in the mind of one I would have trusted in all ordeals. Your suspicions are cruel, and I may say, unworthy of Walter Brayton, and an affianced husband. You may not thank me for what I say; but as one who has madly loved — who will love while she lives, — one I can only know as a friend — I warn you of the evil designs of those who are luring you out upon the treacherous sea of political ambition. Those who tempt, seek your ruin. *Beware of Skillott*, for he is an enemy now, as he ever has been. And if you should ever see the day when all false friends desert, the ill-fated Minnie Hermon will be a friend still. Generous, but deceived friend! with God's blessing upon you, good ——"

She could not speak the word. The deeper heart-tide of her strong woman's love came like a flood upon her, and she wrung his hand and wept, and then hurried through the hall to her chamber.

And darker still the night around her. She would not have thus boldly released Brayton from his vows, but she believed that, with his opening prospects of distinction, he had become ashamed of his connection with the daughter of one who was now considered the basest in the community. She felt the injury, and

Digitized by Google

scorned to claim the love of one who appeared to shun an alliance with a name so branded by all.

"She plays well," gravely remarked Skillott, as he emerged from the hall door. "I was an unwilling listener to your conversation, Mr. Brayton. Miss Hermon is very willing to release you from your engagement. There are reasons for all things. Step this way." Skillott took the arm of Brayton, who followed abstractedly out upon the stoop, and up a pair of stairs into the piazza above. The light came from an open window. As Skillott and Brayton approached it, the former motioned, cautioned and whispered "*false — the proof.*" In cooler moments, Brayton would have scorned the act of looking through an open window for such a purpose.

Yet he loved Minnie Hermon, and the demon of jealousy was again aroused. She almost wished to find some justification of his suspicions, yet dreaded such a result. As he heard voices in the room, one of them masculine and the other Minnie's, all doubts of the propriety of the act gave way before the feverish anxiety to see and know who was in the chamber.

At a table covered with books and writing materials, sat the Hermit, the wide-brimmed hat removed from the broad and now handsome-looking brow, and his usually wild eye beaming with a mild and tender light. Minnie had thrown her bonnet upon the sofa, and stood leaning against the book-case, sobbing violently. The Hermit was asking, in kindly tones, the

Digitized by Google

cause of her trouble, and finally arose and put his arm around her waist, brushed her hair away with his hand, and imprinted a kiss familiarly upon her cheek. She made no effort to repel the familiarity.

Brayton turned away with a sickening sensation, the hot blood flooding to the cheek and again back to the heart, burning in the damning proof as it coursed in its throbbing channels. As he reeled towards the stairway, Skillott glided to his side, and without a word thrust a crumpled paper into his hand and disappeared.

The paper was a letter. Brayton read it again and again, every character a barb, leaving its rankling venom to fester in his heart. It was in the hand-writing of Minnie; there could be no mistake. It was but farther confirmation of her falsehood.

"Father stormed terribly, when I told him who you were, and made threats which I will not repeat. But he dare not refuse the proposition. I have had many fears lately, and it will be a boon to have one near on whom I can lean in trouble. You will have the room which opens out upon the piazza. It is close by mine, and we can spend many an hour together, when there are no suspicious eyes to pry into our intimacy.

"From your affectionate

"MINNIE."

Digitized by Google

New emotions raged in Brayton's bosom. He had been deceived, betrayed. Minnie Hermon was false. The proof was overwhelming; and his rival was that canting hypocrite. He crushed the letter in his hand, and with firm-set teeth, arose and walked the room until a late hour. Now that she had proved faithless and he saw her throwing herself away upon another, he learned how deeply he had loved her, and how heavy the blow. He proudly determined to forget her in the pursuit of his ambitious political aspirings, and bend all his energies to achieve fame and power. The noise of his triumph might reach and wound her who had so deceived him.

There was another night-walker in the neighborhood. Skillott had peered in through the office window, and witnessed the working of his scheme. His web was closing surely around the victim.

As election approached the excitement in relation to candidates increased. Skillott was in for the nomination for judge, and had secured the support of Brayton, by a promise to go in for him the next fall, for representative to Congress. The temperance people, too, must be courted. Dobbs was selected for that purpose. Skillott and his clique knew him to be utterly unprincipled, and ambitious for a place. A promise of a nomination for the clerkship of the county had secured his influence. As many of the temperance people as he could deceive, was so much gain. Halton being the ruling spirit among the Washingtonians, Dobbs approached him. Yet the

Digitized by Google

old veteran was a knotty customer to deal with. But there were few of the temperance people at the caucuses, and Skillott delegates were chosen without much opposition. The game had been as well managed throughout the county, and at the convention the ballot for Skillott, as candidate for judge, was very large, and, on motion of Dobbs, it was declared "unanimous." Many people murmured that such a man should be presented for so important an office; but the machinery of party was set in motion, and there were few at that time that had the moral courage to openly rebel against his nomination. A bolter was odious. People dared not reject a portion of the regular party ticket. The overshadowing despotism of party was brought to bear upon every man who claimed the right to act as a freeman in the discharge of the right of suffrage.

"Well, Halton," said Dobbs, one morning, after the nominations, "How will your folks go? For Skillott, I s'pose?"

"I don't know," answered Halton, "how others will go, but I shall go against him."

"What! and a good Whig, too?"

"Whig or no whig, I never can go for such a man for office, especially that of judge."

"Why not?"

"I don't like the man. His principles and habits both unfit him for the position."

"Well, I know he is not what you call a radical temperance man; but then, he is a friend of the

Digitized by Google

cause. But because a man don't think as we do, or takes a drink once in a while, his own party friends ought not to turn against him when he has received the nomination."

"I have my doubts about this doctrine of sticking to party, right or wrong."

"If all were to take that ground at every little thing that turned up, the party would be broken up, and no good Whig could be elected to any office."

"I very much question whether there is any necessity for a party whose corruption is such that the worst men in community are nominated for the support of honorable men."

"We cannot always expect the best of men to be nominated. It wont do to draw the lines too close in these matters, or the party cannot stick together. If a man receives a nomination, his party ought to sustain him. And besides, there are great principles at stake. They can only be carried out by well organized party strength. We must go the regular party nominations."

"When they are secured by fraud?"

"Ahem! there will be more or less *management* in all nominations. One party does it, and the other must. It's all fair in politics?"

"And so the commission of a fraud by one party, justifies the commission of another."

"Well, they are obliged sometimes to do it, you know, to keep the party together."

"But why not nominate good men, as well as bad?"

Digitized by Google

"We can't always do that. I would be— ahem! glad to see it so; but a party is made up of all kinds of folks, and we cannot always have things just as we want them. Our party is a good deal better about such things than the other; so it would be no use to bolt a nomination. It would only injure the party without effecting anything. I feel bound to go the regular nominations."

"But the way these nominations are often made is an outrage. Look at Skillott's."

"Why, he was nominated unanimously!"

"Unanimously! and by a convention of packed delegates."

"What do you mean by packed delegates?"

"I mean that he and his clique scoured the county three weeks before the caucuses, and cut and dried the whole concern. His nomination was secured before the convention met, and men only came here to go through the farce of nominating him 'unanimously.'"

"O well, everybody tries to get all the delegates they can. That's all right."

"Right to spend money, treat rum, and buy up delegates? What kind of men had he from this village, and how were they selected?"

"What of 'em?" briefly asked Dobbs, his face reddening, for he had been one of Skillott's delegates.

"Sure enough. What of 'em? Rumsellers, sots, gamblers, libertines, and abandoned characters, with few exceptions. You know it as well as I do. And

Digitized by Google

we are bound to stick to party nominations when made by such men!"

"Your prejudices are too strong, Halton. You are saying a good deal. The party is not to blame for having bad men in it. It ought not to be held responsible.

"And had honorable party men, then, ought to be held responsible to sustain the results brought about by such characters?"

"Why, I've seen nothing very bad — no worse than all parties do. We cannot better the matter by splitting tickets. Every true party man must go the clean ticket."

"What do you call a clean ticket?"

"A regular ticket, made out by regular party conventions, where the whole have a voice in the matter. Every one is bound to vote a 'clean ticket.'"

"And so then, the Skillott ticket is a clean one?"

"Why, certainly; he's regularly nominated. It is the regular ticket."

"And we are bound to vote for whoever is put in nomination by the party."

"Most certainly, according to all established usage."

"And so if the devil should be put in nomination by a party convention, a burglar or a horse-thief, it would be a regular, 'clean ticket,' and the party would be bound to go it."

"You don't mean to compare Mr. Skillott to a burglar or horse-thief, I hope?" crustily exclaimed

Digitized by Google

Dobbs, getting nettled at the pointed questions of Halton.

"No; but he was nominated by those, many of them no better."

"You talk like a fool. It is just such kind of talk as injures the cause. I am just as much of a temperance man as anybody, but there is no use in acting like a fool."

"Better a fool than a hypocrite and knave," coolly retorted Halton.

"Ahem! I—I did not mean that you were a fool, but some people are so ultra that they never will effect anything."

"You say you are as much of a temperance man as anybody. And yet you all the time go in with those who are deadly in their hatred to our cause."

"O, they belong to the party. I can't help that."

"But you could have helped going down to the 'Columbian,' among the reeking dens of pollution, and in company with state-prison birds, brothel keepers, and gambling vagabonds, treating to liquor, making speeches, and manufacturing votes for Skillott's caucus. Was that like a temperance man, Mr. Dobbs?"

"You and your hot heads always abuse people, doing the temperance cause ten times more hurt than good. You are determined to go to the dêvil."

"And," continued Halton, "last Sunday you came from church and went into the Alhambra and drinked brandy, and talked politics with the set that there

Digitized by Google

herd; and in the evening, again at the Columbian, manufacturing Skillott delegates. You say that whenever the time comes to carry out temperance principles, you will be one of the best. That means that while office and party are to be served by treating whisky, and going regular nominations, you stick to party; but when the temperance sentiment is the strongest, you will be ready to ride that!"

"You 're a set of cussed fools, all of you. You want to drag the temperance cause into politics and ruin it entirely. Bolt your ticket if you want to, and see what you 'll get if you ever come up for an office. I would vote for an out-an-out rummy before I would for such a d—d fanatic. I have been a temperance man this—a—this twenty years, and get only abuse for it."

Dobbs put his unwieldy hulk in rapid motion—a persecuted man, in his own estimation. His temperance professions were only met with abuse. He had tried all he could to keep temperance out of politics and save the cause, and his efforts were thus unappreciated. Men would act like fools.

The stickler for party nominations was in a sweat. He wished to ride both horses, but the fanatics gave him trouble. An hour after his conversation with Halton, he could have been found in the Alhambra, rehearsing his grievances, and his efforts to keep the temperance question out of politics. He never had believed in mixing religion or temperance with his politics. *He never did.*

Digitized by Google

Skillott's nomination was an outrage. The outrage was consummated by his election. An unprincipled debauchee assumed the ermine, and became a minister of the law. The moral and Christian men of the party scorned the man. They knew him utterly unfit for such a position. His election would, they knew, be a disgrace to the Bench, an injury to the cause of good morals, and an outrage upon justice. But there was no way to avoid it. He was nominated regularly by the party, and party men must support him. Bolters were branded as worse than Judas Iscariots, and deserving of all the opprobrium which party minions and the party press could invoke. Deep and unending political damnation was invoked upon the man who dared to split a ticket. The press stood ready with thongs of bitter denunciation to scourge the hesitating or refractory. The citizen might boast of being a freeman, but no Russian serf was more a cringing slave to his master, than he to his party. In the Oakvale *Daily Advertiser*, of the day previous to election, the following article was aimed at the "restless spirits" who dared to talk of voting as they professed:

"Upon the success of the —— party depends the adoption or rejection of those great principles of national and state policy which have so vital a bearing upon the prosperity of our country. The opposition is pledged to an unscrupulous and vindictive warfare upon the best interests of the Republic. The —— party is emphatically the party of the people. The

Digitized by Google

party is made up of individuals, and each true —— will see the importance of being true to the time-honored faith. No true —— will falter. Upon the united and undivided party the future prosperity of the state and nation depends. Its integrity *must be preserved.*

"From personal and petty piques, there are sometimes found in parties, "restless spirits," who wish to carry their personal animosities into their political action. They wish to make the —— party an engine to carry out their own selfish aims. Great principles are nothing to such men. The integrity of the party must be periled to gratify their one ideaism. We have our eye upon some such who have enjoyed and now enjoy good offices from the party. They depend upon the party for their *bread.* Let them vote anything but a clean ticket if they dare. They are watched. They will be branded as renegades and traitors. They shall be held up to the execration of all true ——, and made such an example of as shall be a warning to all such deserters in the future. Our ticket is worthy of the hearty support of the undivided —— party. Watch the bolters — *mark them.* They will be dealt with hereafter as they deserve. A man who will scratch his ticket is unworthy the name of ——. When holding office, they should, as speedily as possible, be compelled to vacate for men 'who will stand by the party which feeds them.'"

Thus were refractory party men whipped into the traces, and so despotic and potential was the strength

Digitized by Google

and terror of party discipline, that there were few men who dared to face the storm. The foulest combinations ever concocted in grog-shop conclave, went out to the people endorsed as the regular, clean ticket; and the blood-hounds of party drill, fed on the drippings of party, and expecting more, were unleashed to worry and hunt the elector who supposed the right of suffrage his own. A principle more subversive of all political independence, was never made the shameless bond of party union. A slavery more humiliating and repulsive, never was submitted to by an intelligent and free people.

The masses little knew of all the means made use of to secure the election of the candidates. Dobbs was not a whit behind Skillott in a wholesale corruption. Ex-convicts from the prison, and keepers of notorious establishments in Oakvale, were put upon the vigilance or challenging committees. From the funds collected from the candidates with which to "*pay for printing*," large sums were carried throughout the county and thrown into every bar-room. In Oakvale, for a week before the election, the groggeries swarmed with drunkenness. Dobbs and Skillott had engaged them all in their interest, as had the other party, and rum was as free as water. What rum would not purchase, money was depended upon to do. Church influence was invoked. Skillott attended every Church in the place, and gave to the Missionary and Bible Society. To temperance men he talked blandly. He had never found time from

Digitized by Google

his onerous legal business to make much effort in so just a cause, but he was a sincere well-wisher, and if elected, he should feel it his duty to see that the laws were administered faithfully. He saw the poor and the countryman. Their wives and families were inquired after, and they were invited to his office, or to his house for dinner. The Irish vote was courted. Petty office-seekers were all promised assistance in the future. Barrels of beer, and a supply of crackers and cheese, were placed in all the haunts for the thirsty and hungry democracy. Notorious bravadoes and ruffians were chartered to bark and brow-beat. The "Columbian" steamed night and day. It was a notorious "sweat-pit," where voters were made drunken by the score. Dobbs and Skillott were found there all night. From the communion at the church, the former went there on the Sabbath and stayed all night. More than thirty-two voters, in one den, were kept drunk over Sunday under lock and key, and during Monday and Monday night; and Tuesday morning they reeled to the polls, and voted for Skillott and Dobbs. The same game was universal throughout the county. Sober and worthy citizens were brow-beat and challenged by pot-house ruffians, or deterred from the polls by open violence. With oaths and stenching breaths, drunken men reeled and kissed the Bible as they swore in their votes. Dobbs looked innocently upon every one, for both parties did so, and all was fair in politics. At night the groggeries were jammed with a reeling, cursing, shouting, slavering mass of—

Digitized by Google

yeomanry; and fightings and hideous yellings filled the streets until a late hour. The day had been one of wholesale drunkenness and riot. At the close, when the result was learned, the successful candidates gathered in the Daily office and talked complacently of their personal popularity, and the corruptions entered into to defeat them. The Daily announced the victory in glaring capitals, and called it one of the most overwhelming triumphs of the campaign. The opposite party resorted to the basest means to secure their ends, but the people were incorruptible, and had pronounced against them! An oyster supper, alias, a drunken jollification, came off at the "Alhambra" in honor of the result. Judge Skillott was carried home drunk. Dobbs managed to attend the covenant meeting on the following day, Saturday, and gave liberally to the missionary cause, sighing with much sanctity as he leaned his head upon his hand. He was a popular man! He had not mixed any religion or temperance with his politics! As a member of the executive county committee, he with his colleagues had secured a handsome suit of clothes, and fell more than ever in love with the principles of the great —— party.

The regular ticket was elected. Professed temperance men and Christians had voted the "clean ticket." The temperance-professing, brandy-drinking hypocrite was elected clerk, and the favorite of the grog-shop and brothel, judge. The "clean ticket" was elected! The few who murmured at such tickets,

Digitized by Google

were whistled down as one-idea hot-heads, who would ruin a good cause by dragging it into politics. Temperance was a "holy cause," but it was lost the moment its misguided friends forced it into the political arena.

And Judge Skillott did enforce the law! The keepers of the lowest groggeries were fined fifty dollars each. A negro who had sold whisky in a miserable shanty, was severely lectured, fined twenty-five dollars, and "sent up" until paid. The keepers of the Alhambra, the Arland, the Home, etc., were fined *three dollars each*, and at night the judge got drunk on their liquor!

He was elected on the "clean ticket!" by those who felt bound to stick to party, and keep the temperance cause out of politics! They had helped the rum interest put one of its most unscrupulous friends upon the Bench. The rumsellers and friends had all thrown party aside in the contest and stood by their cause. The "clean ticket," consistent, *party* temperance men, had joined with them in carrying rum into politics!

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

SIGNATURE OF THE DEAD.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXVII.

POISON IN THE CUP — SIGNATURE OF THE DEAD — A GUEST NOT INVITED.

Deeper and darker gathered the night around Minnie Hermon! The desertion and consequent cold treatment of Brayton, had struck down evey hope which had cheered her in her sorrows. Scarcely a ray lingered in the gloomy horizon. She did not reproach Brayton. In her chamber, with the darkness and her own bitter thoughts, she remembered him with the strength of a love which their separation had not subdued. A gulf had opened between them, widening every day. Hidden from him and the world, it burned more intensely upon the ruins of the fair fabric it had reared in the inmost heart. As it crumbled away, the pure shrine sent up a flame whose brightness would go out only with life. She saw Walter crossing the first fatal circles of temptation. She would have warned him, but she felt that he cared not for her. Her thoughts turned often upon the change in him and his sentiments towards her. She had not changed in her love,— she wondered at the change in him. Yet, through all the ill which was to come upon him, Minnie Hermon, with the

Digitized by Google

changeless fervor of a true woman's love, was to weep and pray for the object of her heart's first deep idolatry.

Retribution had followed swift and close upon the steps of Hermon. The dread bondage he had helped to weave around so many, had closed upon himself. He had lifted to his own lips the fatal chalice he had commended to his neighbors. Such, in a large majority of cases, has been the punishment of those who deal in rum.

The old man, his hair fast whitening with age and troubles, was a drunkard. One more wholly abandoned to his cups, had not gone from his tavern. The farther he went, the deeper the depths of degradation. He presented the complete and utter wreck of a once intellectual and honorable man. All his manhood had been consumed, and he stalked about his premises, the embodiment of the leprous curse he had introduced and fostered in Oakvale. His personal appearance did not belie his character and habits. His slouched, greasy looking hat and seedy garments — the face bloated and burning with the consuming hectic of constant dissipation — his eye-lids eaten away, and the balls a revolting red, together with his ill-temper and listless movements, presented a revolting picture of ruin.

The Home had changed, as well as its landlord. More fashionable taverns had taken the better custom, and left it but the wrecks of its own making. The sign was weather-beaten, and the posts, rotten at

Digitized by Google

the ground, were settling over. The boards were off the shed, the doors unhinged, and one end of the feeding-trough split and fallen upon the ground. The pump was useless, and grass began to grow thickly among the stones of the platform. The stoop was rotting, and one end had settled as the wall beneath had crumbled away. Many of the windows were broken, and the whole appearance of the house externally, was ruinous and desolate.

With this marked change of circumstances, came a corresponding loss of character and standing. The Home was but the haunt of the lowest grades of the drinking community. It was licensed, for its customers were voters as well as those of the Arland or Alhambra. In its dingy bar-room the sots of Oakvale lingered to complete the work commenced in its better days.

Minnie could not escape a portion of the odium which had fallen upon her father. Even among the drinking class, the Home was in bad repute. As its mistress, she suffered with its waning fortunes. Deserted by Brayton, and only known as the daughter of a drunken tavern keeper, the better class of society scarcely ever troubled themselves with a thought of the lonely girl. The disgrace of her father and the house was not without its effect upon her. She felt that she was neglected, perhaps despised, and consequently shunned society. Crimes worse than selling liquor even, had been whispered against Hermon; vices worse than drunkenness were said to hold

Digitized by Google

their revels at the Home. Shut mostly within its doors, it was not strange that scandal should fasten a share of the stigma upon Minnie. She had often been seen nights, threading the poorer streets of Oakvale. Had her object been known, the community would have witnessed some of the holiest charities which ever fell unheralded at the hearthsides of the poor and needy.

With all this unjust opinion against her, she still clung to her wretched father. He had rewarded her devotion to him, with coarse abuse and — *blows!* And in that rendezvous of the wretched and vile, her pure spirit lingered like an angel in unbroken darkness.

There were few of the drinking men of Oakvale who had descended more rapidly than Walter Brayton's father. He had squandered all his property, and was verging upon the confines of pauperism. He and Walter had quarreled at an early day about the Home, and his drinking habits, and since had had but little intercourse with each other. Still Walter had been careful that his parent did not suffer for any of the necessaries of life. Suddenly, good, or it may be, bad fortune, came unexpectedly to the old man. A bachelor brother in Rhode Island died and left him a handsome little fortune of ten thousand dollars, to go, at his death, to Walter. This was joyous news to old Brayton, as well as to his cronies and the dealers. They judged right as to the strength of his love of drink, and the hopelessness of his reformation.

Digitized by Google

Halton and his companions made desperate exertions to save the old gentleman, but in vain. Howard tried with no better success. Walter met with abuse, his father charging him with an itching to finger the money before his time.

Deeper drank Brayton and his companions. Wilder and more devilish were their revels. Old Brayton's money was sown like chaff, for ten thousand dollars seemed to him exhaustless. Pipes were lighted with bank-bills, and scores were treated by the week. Often dead drunk during these periods, hundreds of dollars were plundered from him by his companions and the more abandoned of the dealers, where the money was spent. Even the Arland and Alhambra were glad to sell liquor to a man worth ten thousand dollars! Walter looked upon these things with sorrow and shame, and for a time all his old hatred of the traffic burned up as hotly as ever. He made constant efforts to enlist the societies for the reclamation of the old man. Every effort failed, and in six weeks time nearly one half of the ten thousand dollars had been squandered or stolen by the harpies who hung around him.

Skillott, through the confidence of Walter, had learned all the circumstances of the legacy, and his eyes glistened as schemes for its possession were planned in his mind. It was now wasting, and, should any of it be left, Walter was the last man he would wish to have it. While pushing for the judgeship, he had held out the post of a representative to Con-

Digitized by Google

gress to Walter. Skillott determined to push for the post himself, and the possession of wealth by the victim might foil all his plans.

Skillott did not visit the Home save late in the evenings. It was in bad repute, and the demagogue wished to retain the semblance of respectability. Every night, at a late hour, however, he was found at Hermon's. He did not always see Minnie; but whenever he could get an opportunity, he assumed unwonted grace and essayed to appear devoted in his attentions. She shunned him, and recoiled from his honeyed words as from the hiss of a viper, hardly concealing the deep and unconquerable dislike she felt towards the man. An utter stranger to the honorable of the sex, Skillott was a sneering skeptic about their being such among women, and he did not in the least abandon his base designs against Minnie. He loved her not. Her sharp and scornful repulses to his sickening flatteries, had stung him until he was maddened. Vindictive and withering in his hate against man or woman, as well as fiery and ungovernable in his passions, he seldom commenced his approaches, but what he accomplished the ruin of his victim. Could he grasp Minnie and Walter both in his net, the triumph would be a double one. "He would not be foiled by old Hermon's daughter," he muttered as he turned across the street on his way to the Home.

As Skillott entered the hall he met Minnie going out.

"Ah! Miss Hermon — beg your pardon, but like

Digitized by Google

the miller of a summer night, I am constantly drawn to the flame," spoke the lawyer, in his blandest tones, and with a touch of assumed tenderness. With a cold inclination of the head, Minnie stood back for him to pass in, and through the right door to the bar-room. Shutting the street door he still stood with his back against it, and looked close in her face. She recoiled, and asked to be permitted to pass.

"Do not be thus cold to one who takes a deep interest in your welfare. I would be a friend to you, Miss Hermon," continued Skillott, in low tones. There was a strange and thrilling influence in them which sent a chill over his listener. She felt that that burning gaze, peculiar to the man, was fastened upon her, and turned to leave him.

"No, no, Miss Hermon, you must not leave so. If I have offended, it has been from excess of regard. Surely a lovely girl like yourself would not go into the street at this time of night without a protector."

"I need none, sir," briefly replied Minnie, as she now stepped to go out of the door which Skillott had moved away from.

"Nay, sweet girl, but you do. One like you should have *one* friend. I should be happy to be smiled upon by one whom an unworthy friend has abandoned."

"Let me pass, sir. Your language and manner are insulting."

"Not so hasty, Miss. I think too much of you tc insult you." Then bending closely to Minnie, he whispered words which we will not repeat.

Digitized by Google

"You're a villain! Hands off, sir! Coward—*help!*"

There was a glancing shadow in the dim light, and Skillott received a blow which felled him to the floor. As the revelers came out of the bar-room, he was found insensible. He was taken up, and after a time came to himself. No one had been seen in the hall, and Skillott, believing that it was Minnie who gave him the blow, stated that he fell as he entered, from catching his toe on the threshold. Minnie had scarcely heard the blow and the fall of Skillott, before she was lifted like a child, and noiselessly borne up the stairs by a strong arm. Minnie felt keenly this gross insult in her own house. It was suggestive of many a bitter thought.

With a vow of revenge for the blow and the insulting repulse, Skillott dismissed the matter from his mind as he noticed the progress of matters in the bar-room. The elder Brayton and some two or three others were present, and all drunk. At the suggestion of Skillott, the others were prevailed upon to leave, under pretense of closing the house. Brayton was too good a customer to be thus turned out, and was left snoring by the fire-place, his chin dropping upon his breast.

For a long time Skillott and Hermon conversed in whispers across the counter, the latter drunk enough to be a blind tool of the cool-headed lawyer.

"Brayton is making a complete fool of himself. It is too bad."

Digitized by Google

"Yes; he can't stand it long so."

"How he wastes money!"

"Yes; it goes like dirt. He will very soon run through it."

"How much do you s'pose he has left of the legacy?"

"Half on't, like enough; may be more — don't know!"

"Too bad to have him squander it so — don't do anybody any good."

"It's his own."

"Just so," blandly answered Skillott. "But such men as Jud Lane and Mike Henry are getting more than their share of it." The bait took, and a slight smile crept coldly over Skillott's countenance, as he watched the effects of his words upon Hermon.

"It would be a kindness, would some trusty friends take charge of his money and *keep it for him.*" The lawyer still watched Hermon keenly, as he assumed a careless tone and air, drumming with his fingers on the counter. Hermon made no response, and Skillott continued:

"I'll warrant Jud Lane has taken a good share, and he never has done one-hundredth part as much for Brayton as *you have.*"

Hermon did not see the sneer that lingered around Skillott's lips as he spoke the last words, but began to be aroused by the crafty words of the Judge. Jud Lane was getting too much of old Brayton's ten thousand dollars! The judge noted the kindling of

Digitized by Google

the landlord's avarice and continued, forcing a yawn, and still drumming carelessly upon the counter:

"You would have done the old man a great kindness, as well as Walter, if you had always taken his money when he is in one of his drunken sprees, and kept it from those that plunder him." Still no response from Hermon.

"Indeed, I have blamed you because you have not. It is not doing as you would be done by."

"I — I — ahem! — I — have occasionally taken — care of money for him. I thought I'd better take it than to have him waste it. He don't take care of his money at all."

"Right, Mr. Hermon," and Skillott's eye glittered. "Right. I had thought as judge, of ordering the same thing, but I feared Walter would not like it. How much have you saved him? Enough to do him some good when the rest is spent, I hope."

"Why — a — about — let me see: a quite a sum. It would have all been lost if I hadn't got it laid away for him."

"Four or five hundred dollars, perhaps?" and he whistled as he looked leisurely about the room and tapped the tips of his fingers together.

"Yes — about that, I s'pose," replied Hermon, completely won by the careless manner of Skillott. The latter had not lost a single word or expression of the landlord's face. Assuming a confidential air, and drawing closer to Hermon, he continued:

"Between you and me, Hermon — this between

Digitized by Google

ourselves, you know — it has been talked over by a few of old Brayton's friends, and concluded that it is best to devise some plan to save his property. As I am judge, and have his confidence, the whole matter has been entrusted to my arrangement. Knowing that you and he were intimate, we thought it best to ask your assistance. As it is, the ten thousand dollars will not last him a year. And then, if he dies, there is another trouble. I would not wish it noised about, for he is a friend of mine; but it is a sad truth that Walt has got so he steams it, and if the money falls into his hands, it will go the same way that it is now going. So we have concluded that you and I get the old man to put his money into our hands for safe keeping. It is the only way it can be saved; for otherwise Jud Lane will have it, as sure as fate. Now the plan we propose is this," continued Skillott, in whispers, laying the finger of his right hand carefully in the palm of the left. "We will get him to sign writings, (I've got them here in my pocket,) deeding to us all his property for safe keeping, carrying the impression that it is as security for moneys borrowed. We are then to give him small sums, or ourselves pay his expenses, and keep charge of the money. Thus you see we should have the use of the money as long as he should live, and he could not spend it around town. He could board here, and you could have the pay for his board and grog. I think this a good plan."

"Most certainly I do. Jud Lane cannot then plunder him," and Hermon rubbed his hands at the

Digitized by Google

thought. That snaky smile again crept around the corners of Skillott's mouth.

"Now it seems to me we shall not have a better time than to-night. It is necessary for his good that it be done soon — the sooner the better. Have you a room where we shall not be interrupted?"

"The back chamber."

"Just so; that will do. We shall not be interrupted there, probably?"

"Not at this time o'night."

"We must not be; because, you see, it is highly important that the thing be nicely managed. Better take pen and ink up there."

As Hermon came back, Skillott still stood drumming carelessly upon the counter, and old Brayton sat snoring by the hearth. The light burned dimly in the bar-room, and the noise of tramping feet had long since ceased in the street. The windows, only, were heard as they rattled in the fitful gusts which puffed around the Home.

"Now," said Skillott, "we must awake him, and arouse him with a glass of brandy, and then persuade him up stairs to bed. Pour out the brandy, and as you lift him up I will hand it to you."

Hermon passed around and shook Brayton by the shoulder, awakening him from his drunken slumber with much difficulty. While he was doing so, Skillott emptied the contents of a vial into the brandy, and then handed it to Hermon, who had just got the dozy drunkard upon his feet. He made no objections

Digitized by Google

to the brandy, and after much coaxing, was persuaded to let them assist him up to bed. Skillott, before leaving the bar-room, took the precaution to lock the doors. On reaching the chamber, Skillott commenced, in blandest tones, to induce the drunken man to sign the paper presented to him. The man stared vacantly as the pen was put into his hand, with the statement that the paper was a receipt for money they had borrowed of him, which they now wished to pay him. Mechanically, Brayton put his hand where directed, but was evidently too drunk to understand what he was about, or to write his name alone. A gust of wind slammed the window blind furiously, startling both parties abruptly. Skillott moved to the window, but on Hermon assuring him that the window could not be reached save from the ground, he fastened the blinds and returned to the drunken man. As the hand was again placed upon the paper, Brayton uttered a cry of pain, and doubled convulsively in his chair. There was a slight paleness around Skillott's mouth, and Hermon looked on with astonishment.

"What was in your brandy?" asked the Judge, with his eye fastened keenly upon the landlord.

"Nothing. Why do you ask?" answered Hermon with a troubled countenance.

"It is queer that he should have convulsions. Is he subject to them?"

"Not that I ever knew of."

"Then I fear he is going to have the *delirium-tremens*. He will arouse the whole neighborhood, and

Digitized by Google

probably die before the property is safe where Walt cannot spend it."

"Come, Brayton, sign the receipt; I must go home." Again the pen was put into the man's hand, but his agony was now evidently excruciating. He writhed in convulsions, doubling down on his stomach, and howling in agony.

"This must not be; he will injure himself," said Skillott. "We must hold him on the bed, and keep the paroxysms down until he is quiet. If he shrieks it will make him worse. Take hold of his feet — quick."

As the two tossed Brayton upon the bed, he struggled and shrieked until Skillott's blood ran cold. But it was too late to retreat. He threw himself upon Brayton, and told Hermon to put the pillow over his head and hold it down. "It would keep him from exhausting himself."

Hermon did as ordered, but the united strength of the two could not hold Brayton still. With a howl of pain, he hurled them upon the floor and sprang into the middle of the room, writhing and doubling, and the froth bubbling from the mouth. He stared wildly at Skillott and Hermon.

"In God's name, what's the matter of me. Call a doctor quick, or I can't live. O dear — merciful God! there is fire in my bowels. Water! quick! for God's sake — WATER!"

He shrieked again as the paroxysm took him. With desperate energy Skillott leaped upon him, and

Digitized by Google

thrust his handkerchief into his mouth, and with almost superhuman strength, again threw him on the bed. The pillow was again held down upon Brayton's face; Skillott pressed upon him with all his strength.

Weaker grew the man, and less violent his convulsions. Half-smothered shrieks, and prayers, and cries for breath and water, came from under the pillow, even with Hermon's weight upon it. A fierce, convulsive shiver ran over the trunk and limbs; they slowly straightened out as Skillott relaxed his grasp; the deep chest heaved fearfully for breath, and Brayton lay still.

"Quick, now, before the paroxysm comes on again — the pen and light."

Hermon removed the pillow and handed them, as ordered. Skillott had raised Brayton to a sitting position.

"Here, Hermon, let him lean upon you; he is weak after such fits. Come, Brayton, sign the papers, and then you can sleep. Ah! I see; your hand trembles. Let me aid you."

Skillott placed his hand upon Brayton's, and guided the fingers while they traced "*Gerald Brayton.*"

"There," said Skillott, "we will not trouble you more — you can lie down," and the Judge laid Brayton carefully back upon the pillow.

"Horrible distemper — that *delirium-tremens.* He needs rest and quiet. Come out right in the morning, I guess. Well enough to call in early, but would not disturb him during the night."

Digitized by Google

Covering Brayton with the quilts, the two went down.

The dead was alone! Could the countenance of the corpse have been seen as it sat on the bed, and by the aid of the living traced its signature; the glassy eyes protruding with dying agony, and glaring upon vacancy; the distorted features, and the mouth foaming, with here and there flecks of blood; the close-shut teeth, the throat and bosom bare as it had been stripped in the scuffle, and the hair clammy and matted on the damp and ghastly—the picture of all that is horrible in a death of keenest agony, would have been presented.

As Hermon turned the key in the chamber door, the slamming of the blinds and the increasing wind alone disturbed the silence of the chamber. Swiftly Skillott sped along the deserted streets to his home.

Two hours later, and the window in the chamber where the struggle had been, was carefully raised, and a dark shadow, undefined in the dim starlight, glided into the room and pulled a small, dark lantern from a loose robe which he wore around him. Slowly and silently he peered towards the bed, and then stepped noiselessly to the head of it. He leaned down and looked closely into the face of the corpse. He lifted the lamp still nearer, and laid the back of his hand against the cheek. He recoiled at the touch; but again and again, and still more searchingly looked down into the ghastly features, thrusting his hand into the bosom to feel the heart. He then lifted the pil-

Digitized by Google

low and turned it over. It was wet with a slimy froth, and streaked with blood. He seemed to come to some satisfactory conclusion about the matter, and dropping the hand which he had lifted from the quilt, stood erect. There was a dark glitter in his eye, and a paleness around his sternly closed mouth. A new thought seemed to occupy his attention, and he glided to the door, but found it locked. With a key from his own pocket he unlocked it, and after listening, passed down and into the bar-room. In the excitement of the time, Hermon had set the glass from which Brayton drank back upon the counter, and forgotten to rinse and put it in the usual place. It now stood where he left it. The Hermit, for it was he, took it in his hand, and after smelling it closely, looked steadily into the bottom. As he stirred the strange-looking sediment with his fore-finger, he exclaimed with low, yet bitter energy, "Oh! ho! dear friends. Poison in the cup, indeed! And the *murderers are not all hung yet!*" He stood a moment in thought, and then carefully securing the glass, reëntered the hall and disappeared up the stairs. The key was turned in the door of the back chamber, and the Hermit was again alone with the dead.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXVIII.

TWO MORNING CALLS — A LIVE MAN FOR A DEAD ONE.

Daylight had scarcely dawned, when there was a loud rap at Skillott's door. Again and again it was repeated, each successive time with increased energy. It was an unwelcome sound, and for a time he feigned slumber. Guilt is ever fearful, and trembles at the sound of every footfall.

As the noise increased, Skillott threw on his morning gown and opened the door, and somewhat bluntly demanded the cause of the interruption. He stared as he saw Hermon standing before him, but it was momentary. As blandly as usual, after affecting a yawn, he inquired what was wanting at so early an hour.

Hermon was the picture of embarrassment. His flame-red face was haggard, his manner stealthy and uneasy, and his eye restless. Turning his eye up the street to assure himself that he was unobserved, he darted through the half-opened door, and closed it as he entered. Placing his back against it, he stood looking Skillott beseechingly in the face.

"Why, man, what is the matter — what is wanting?", again asked Skillott, with a well-assumed air of fretfulness at so unceremonious an interruption.

Digitized by Google

"*Brayton is dead!*" whispered Hermon, in a husky voice, after looking around to see if no one but themselves was in the hall.

"Ah! indeed! Died last night, eh?"

"Found him dead before daylight this morning. The body was cold," and a shudder crept over the hardened landlord.

"That fit of *tremens*, then, must have finished the old man."

"Are you sure — are you *sure*, Skillott, that he died of the *tremens?*" eagerly asked Hermon in an appealing tone.

"Why, how else could he have died? A man of his age cannot drink as hard as he did, and stand it long, Mr. Hermon."

There yet remained something upon Hermon's mind, and he lingered. Skillott made a gesture of impatience, and suggested that, as the matter did not concern him, he had better send for Walter or the coroner.

"But," continued Hermon, with an air of abstraction, "s'posing they should attempt to show he didn't die of the *tremens;* what do you s'pose would come of it?"

"Nonsense, man; one would suppose your liquor killed him, and that you expected to be hung for it, from your manner."

A slight shudder again crept over Hermon, and the sweat stood out in drops upon his forehead and upper lip. Skillott grew confident, as the drift of the

Digitized by Google

former's fears became apparent, and as quickly formed his plan with which to hold the landlord hereafter.

"But liquor would not *poison* a man, you know," placing a strange emphasis upon the word.

"You know best whether there was any *poison* in the liquor; I *saw* you give it to him."

"But you told me to give him the brandy."

"But I did not suppose it was poisoned. It certainly was not!" Hermon started at the question.

"You know I have enemies, Skillott, and as he died in my house, they might say unpleasant things, you know; and besides, his signing over his property to you and me wouldn't help the matter."

"O, I'll see to that matter; the property shall not injure you." There was a smile lurking around the mouth of the Judge as he gave the assurance.

"As to that matter, it would injure you as well as me, both having an interest in it."

"Between you and me, Hermon," replied Skillott, "I feared the man was on his last legs, and knowing that you had many and bitter enemies who would make a handle of his death in your house, I thought it best, on the whole, to have the conveyance made out in my name. There are not many who have knowl edge of the fact; but the truth is, I have lent old Brayton a good deal of money within a few years past. It would be but right, you know, that I should make sure of what he had left."

"You — you don't mean to say that I am not to have a share — to have charge of the property!"

Digitized by Google

"Precisely," blandly answered the Judge. "That is best, you know, until the storm about his dying in *your house* blows over."

"You didn't say anything last night about his owing you."

"Nor did I give him that *last drink*," whispered Skillott, a slight sneer creeping across the upper lip.

"But you told me to give it to him," replied the landlord, deprecatingly.

"I did not tell you to put *poison in the glass*, though!"

Hermon fairly jumped, a more ominous paleness spreading over his countenance. He stood a moment, and some of his old spirit came to his aid.

"Neither did I, sir, as perhaps others can testify," he retorted with considerable energy and meaning, pulling a paper from his side pocket and thrusting it into Skillott's palm. He watched the Judge as the latter traced the contents. The usual sneer passed off his features as he read, and he drew his under lip thoughtfully between his teeth. Hermon was not so far broken down intellectually, as not to mark the change in Skillott's manner. The note ran thus:

"I have drinked my last at the *Home*. There was *poison in the cup*, and I died by violence! *The dead sign no papers?* Old Brayton is dead, but the *murderers are not hung yet!*

"A GUEST NOT INVITED."

Digitized by Google

"And you thought to frighten me by penning such stuff as this," sneered the Judge as he finally lifted his eyes from the paper.

"It's false — I had no more to do with penning it than you did," answered Hermon with spirit.

"Where did it come from, then? I should like to know!"

"I found it in the *dead man's fingers!*"

"The devil! How could that be?" bluntly asked the Judge, without the usual sneer, again and more tightly drawing his under lip between his teeth, and resting his hand upon a chair, his gaze still fastened upon the paper.

"You can tell as well as I," doggedly answered the landlord, regaining confidence, as he noticed the effect of the note upon Skillott.

"The dead can't write," mused the Judge, looking long and closely still upon the paper.

"But he might not have been dead when we left him. The pen and ink were left, you know."

"It is strange, strange," continued Skillott, with marked uneasiness in his features.

After leaving Brayton, on the previous evening, Hermon had become disturbed in his mind about his appearance. It did not seem to him like the *delirium-tremens*. He was troubled with the thought of his death in his house, and before daylight, lighted his candle and entered the chamber. Brayton lay as they had left him, save one hand, which was across the breast. The landlord listened to catch the sound

Digitized by Google

of his breathing; but all was still. With a quicker pulse he then stepped to the bedside and let the light fall upon the face. It was ghastly, distorted, horrible! He placed his fingers upon Brayton's. A shudder crept from the dead over the living, and Hermon drew back. At that moment his eye rested upon the paper in the dead man's fingers which he carried to Skillott. Hermon left the room with a trembling step, and immediately sought the glass which he had left on the counter, but it was gone. At early light he had hurried to Skillott's for advice.

"Humph! This does look a little squally for you, friend Hermon, it cannot be denied. This is not Brayton's hand-writing. You have enemies in the village, and some of them might have been eavesdropping last night.

"But the door was locked, and the key in my own pocket. How could any one have got into the chamber?"

With all his attempt to appear careless and only solicitous for Hermon's case, Skillott was troubled. That paper in the dead man's hand — the contents — and the fact stated by Hermon that the glass was missing, had an ugly look. It was for *his* interest to assist Hermon so far as was safe. If worst came to worst, he had already determined to turn the whole tide of circumstances against Hermon, and sacrifice him to save himself. It was clear to him that an unseen enemy was around, and he felt that undefinable sense of dread which a person experiences when ex-

Digitized by Google

pecting a blow in the dark. At last a thought fixed his attention, and he entered his library and commenced hunting among some loose papers. He came to one, and for some moments compared the writing upon it, with that on the note handed him by Hermon. He had evidently found a clue. The paper hunted up by Skillott was a notice of a temperance meeting, written by the Hermit. There was something in this knowledge besides the mystery of the affair, to give Skillott serious thoughts. The Hermit was dreaded by all the Judge's class. If that everywhere-present, and eagle-eyed individual had obtained any knowledge of the real state of things, he was an enemy to be dreaded. Skillott's countenance was pale, as he continued to compare papers; but he shut his teeth harshly together, and a fiendish light gleamed in his dark eye. The stakes were increasing, and the play was becoming extremely hazardous.

There was another early call in Oakvale. Doctor Howard was awakened from a deep slumber by a single rap upon his door. It was familiar, for no other was ever given in the same manner, and he was not surprised when he found the Hermit standing upon the piazza, closely muffled in his long robe.

"Who is sick now, my friend," inquired the Doctor, yawning and rubbing his eyes.

"Nobody sick — *dead!*"

"Indeed! who's dead, may I ask?"

"Gerald Brayton."

Digitized by Google

"The old man dead? I feared his habits would destroy him."

"Habits did not kill him. *Poisoned!*"

"What! Brayton poisoned! How do you know that?"

"*See it done*—know it!"

"Then he has committed suicide!"

"*No.* Others committed murder!"

"Impossible! Who would wish to poison Gerald Brayton? He was his own worst enemy."

"Dont know who *wished* to; know they *did.* That's enough."

"And you saw this!"

"I did. But did not suppose there was poison in the cup until afterwards, or I could have saved him. Thought he had the *tremens.*"

"But this is a serious matter. What evidence have you that he was poisoned, more than your eyes beheld?"

The Hermit carefully drew a glass from his inner side-pocket, tightly bound over the top with buckskin and strings. Untying the latter, he handed the glass to the Doctor.

"There! look at that. He drank out of that. A vial was emptied into it first."

Howard's interest was now aroused, and with the Hermit he entered his office.

"*Poison!* sure enough," he exclaimed, after a careful examination, "and of the most deadly kind."

"S'posed so," was the brief response of the Hermit.

Digitized by Google

"But, in God's name, my friend, who gave Brayton from this cup to drink, and why?"

"Know who; cant tell why. Guess, though."

"This is horrible. What must be done? Who were the parties, and where was it done?"

"'Twas more horrible to see. They must *hang*. Parties well known. Done at the Home. Questions all answered."

"What do you say! — at *Hermon's?*"

"Just said so."

"But we must know who there are in our midst who would do such things."

"Know soon enough. Give me the glass."

Howard mechanically obeyed, being familiar with the ways of the eccentric individual before him. If he was scenting the footsteps of wrong, the Doctor knew that he would be as wary and untiring as a blood-hound. As the Hermit took the glass and again carefully tied the buckskin over the top, he turned to go.

"When shall I see you again?" anxiously inquired Howard.

"To-night. *Look at the glasses in Hermon's bar!*" The Hermit turned on his heel, and strode down the walk with more energy even than was customary for him. Not until he was gone, did his last words come with their full meaning to the understanding of the Doctor.

Circumstances proved most unexpectedly favorable to the plans of parties more directly interested in the

Digitized by Google

Brayton affair. Skillott had managed the matter cunningly, and by ten o'clock, through the daily paper and on busy tongues, it was circulated that Brayton had died the night before at the Home, after a protracted debauch, of *delirium-tremens*. Such a result was not looked upon with surprise.

Walter Brayton was absent from Oakvale, and as a friend of him and his father, Skillott volunteered to take charge of the investigation, and of the burial of the corpse. The coroner's inquest was brief. A number of persons testified to the deep drunkenness of Brayton on the evening before his death, while Skillott and Hermon testified directly to the manner of his death. The former stated that he had been called in to assist during the paroxysms. The jury pronounced a verdict of "*Death by visitation of Providence!*"

Howard had been called away to attend a sick patient, soon after his interview with the Hermit. The patient died after a severe and protracted struggle, detaining the doctor until a late hour in the afternoon. As soon as possible he returned home, feeling confident, however, that the Hermit would watch the proceedings.

Turning his horse loose into the yard, he entered the house to snatch a mouthful, and found the following characteristic note:

"Doctor, the murderers have planned to put their poison *under ground*. Brayton will be buried before

Digitized by Google

night, and *dug up afterwards*, and hidden. Let him be buried. We will attend the night party. Speak not a word. HERMIT."

In deep thought, Howard passed over to the Home, where a large number were still assembled, many of them disgustingly drunk. Sure enough, the preparations for the burial of the corpse were in an advanced state. It was thought that the body had better not be kept long unburied!

Howard asked to see the corpse. With a look at Skillott, after some hesitation, Hermon led him to the chamber. Howard was immediately satisfied that Brayton did not die of the drunkard's madness. His experienced eye detected the unmistakable footprints of a more fatal agency, plainly written in the hue of the flesh. He noticed the marks of the scuffle upon the floor, and turned away. Hermon had been watching his eye, and grew agitated as it rested upon him. But for the testimony already revealed to him by the Hermit, Howard would have pronounced the death one of *strangulation*.

While they were standing in the room, the sexton came for the corpse. Hermon was repulsively officious, as rumsellers usually are when at the funeral of any of their victims. As they all emerged into the street, Howard balanced over the counter and snatched one of the glasses from the sink and thrust it into his side-pocket. As he, too, went out, the crowd were following the corpse to the burial ground.

Digitized by Google

Upon an awning-post of one of the main streets, the following notice attracted his attention:

"BRAYTON WAS MURDERED! — *There was poison in the cup.* Those who gave it to him are superintending his funeral. They expect that the grave will cover their guilt.

"A GUEST NOT INVITED."

Howard was startled at the boldness of this act. Ere others became aware of the charge, the funeral was over, and night had set in. But the news of the placards went like lightning, and became the subject of intense talk. Most of the people believed that Skillott, from his standing, and the straightforward testimony at the inquest, was utterly incapable of such a crime. And besides, there could be no motive for its commission. The Judge was careful to give currency to the belief that the placard had been posted by some personal enemy.

Late in the evening the Hermit again called at Howard's office. In his usual brief style he stated what he had learned during the day. Skillott had become convinced that some one had seen, or become acquainted with the facts of Brayton's death. It was evident to Skillott that the Hermit was in the matter; and knowing the untiring disposition of that individual, he felt that prompt and thorough measures must be taken. It had been arranged that the body of Brayton should be taken up and sunk in the river,

Digitized by Google

and the story started that it had been stolen by the doctors. The Hermit would not reveal how he had acquired the information, but Howard relied upon it.

"We must attend the party to-night," briefly and sternly he continued, "and you will see who put poison in the cup. I will call at the right time. Be ready."

The night was dark and stormy. The sky was densely overcast with heavy clouds. A cold, drizzling rain had commenced falling about nine o'clock, melting away the thin snow which had fallen the night previous, making the darkness deep and impenetrable.

The pulse-beat of the busy throng had ceased to throb in the streets of Oakvale; but the rain swept fiercely down the streets and around the corners. The water running from the eave-gutters, and the creaking of the signs as they swayed in the wind, were the only sounds which mingled with the fitful violence of the storm.

While the town-clock was slowly chiming the hour of midnight, two persons, deeply muffled, carrying a shovel and a dark lantern each, turned off from the main street, and through a narrow lane pursued their way in silence out of the village. As they cleared the settled portions, they struck into the fields, and as fast as possible pushed on against the driving storm. Coming to the bank of the river, they turned to the right and followed it up to the burial ground and entered. Slowly they hunted among the graves, stopping when they came to that of Brayton. After lis-

Digitized by Google

tening a moment, the lamps were hidden and both commenced with their shovels to throw out the fresh earth. They were both strong men, and the coffin was soon reached. The lid had been but slightly fastened, and readily gave way to an energetic pull at the edges. A cold shudder crept from the corpse along the nerves of the living as one of the diggers felt for the face. There was a moment's hesitation, and the hook which had been provided was thrust quickly under the chin. Both took hold of the rope, and with united strength pulled the body out upon the grass. Again they listened, but there was no sound save the steadily beating storm. A dark blanket had been provided, in which the body was closely rolled, and a rope fastened around the feet. The latter, after much difficulty, were drawn closely to the head, and the rope passed under the arms. With a rail which had been brought from the fence, the body was raised upon their shoulders and carried towards the river, upon the bank of which they left it, and returned to fill the grave and get their lamps and tools.

Others than the grave-robbers had been witnesses of the act. Closely hidden near by, were Howard and the Hermit. For two hours they had remained in the storm, their garments wet through and through. They had obtained a full view of the countenances of the diggers, as one of the lamps had been held a moment above the grave. As the body was borne off, the two followed closely, and barely escaped a contest with the diggers as they returned to the grave.

Digitized by Google

"Now is our time," whispered the Hermit, as he laid his hand on Howard's arm. "Lift."

They then put their own shoulders under the rail, and as swiftly as possible carried the body to the fence. Leaving Howard in charge of it, the Hermit returned to the spot where it was first left, to await the return of the diggers.

The grave was soon filled, and the diggers returned to the bank where they had left the corpse, designing to fasten a heavy stone to it and sink it in the river. They looked some time for the body at the point where they supposed they had left it.

"Skillott, Skillott," said one of the parties in a low voice, as he stumbled against the Hermit, "I have found it!"

"How in the d——l did it come out there? I thought we left it just by this little knoll."

"We didn't steer right in the dark. But where in the world is the rail?"

"Did you leave it in the rope?"

"Yes; but it aint there now."

"It must be there if you left it there," and the one addressed as Skillott came up.

"Good God! *it's warm!*" sharply uttered the first speaker, jumping to his feet as though he had clutched a viper.

"You be ———, Hermon! What are you frightened at?"

"See, yourself!" answered the trembling landlord, for it was him.

Digitized by Google

Skillott unhesitatingly stooped and touched the body. He started slightly as his hand encountered the long hair, but it was wet and cold. He had forgotten that the body had been wrapped in a blanket. Passing his hand up over the face, he found a thick, bushy beard; but the face was cold and wet as the hair. Somewhat excited and bewildered, he laid his hand upon the bosom; still more amazed as he found buttons there. The next instant his fingers were in the vice-like grasp of a living hand!

"H—l and furies!" he almost howled as he snatched his own away. "This is no dead man, or else that hand was yours, Hermon. No fooling with me!"

"I havn't touched you," answered the trembling landlord, as he took a step or two back.

Skillott drew his lamp from his bosom, and placing it before his own features, let the light shine down before him. The spectacle presented was one to startle bolder men than Skillott. On the ground, stretched at full length, his eye glittering in the dull lamplight, and his long hair and beard wet with the storm, was the Hermit. He gave that peculiar chuckle as he was revealed to the diggers.

"Priest or devil, take that! Your foul carrion shall feed the fishes too!"

Lightly the Hermit sprang from his position, the knife which Skillott had aimed at his breast sticking in the turf where he had lain. A sneering ha! ha! answered the fierce curses of the baffled digger. The

Digitized by Google

latter hurled the knife fiercely in the direction of the voice; but it only clinked against a tomb-stone which it struck beyond, and again provoked that sneering laugh. There was then a flash and a report, and a ball went whistling past his head.

"Ha, ha, ha! poison the living and rob the dead! *Judge* Skillott and John Hermon! the murderers are not all hung yet," was echoed back from a different direction than where the shot was fired.

All parties now stood silent in the impenetrable darkness. With half-smothered curses and still more devilish plans for meeting the new danger and at the same time securing revenge, Skillott took Hermon by the arm, and the two moved carefully towards the road. As they were picking their way along by the side of the fence near the corner of the grounds, they were again startled by the unwelcome guest.

"Ho! ho! gentlemen diggers! Why not take along the body? A chemical analysis might show who *put poison in the cup!* ha, ha!"

The sounds were close to the ear, and Skillott struck fiercely towards them, but the blow fell upon the fence. The act was again answered by that sneering laugh.

The idea of an analysis of the stomach of Brayton fixed more deeply the dark purpose of Skillott. He was not a man to hesitate when such dangers thickened around him. Against the remonstrance of Hermon, he called at Doctor Howard's as he entered the village, and disguising his voice, inquired for the

Digitized by Google

Doctor. Mrs. Howard answered that he had been called away in the evening, and had not returned. Skillott turned away, passed stealthily around the house to the barn, and tossed the shovel and the cord and hook, together with the lanterns, into the loft over the shed. An hour later, and he was in his office; but his sleepless eye gleamed with unwonted brilliancy, and his mind was busy perfecting his dark schemes.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE WICKED PLOT — THE WICKED TRIUMPH.

EARLY on the morning succeeding the scenes portrayed in the last chapter, the following placard appeared in the streets:

"The grave robbers about! Gerald Brayton's body stolen last night. Order loving citizens are requested to meet at the Town Hall at nine o'clock, to take measures to protect our graves from desecration.

"BY ORDER."

The excitement was intense. For two years past a number of occurrences of the same kind had aroused the community to the deepest exasperation.

An hour before the time appointed in the call, the Hall was crowded. The excited and indignant populace gave ominous indications that summary measures would be taken, should the person or persons guilty of the outrage be ferreted out. A low rush of angry muttering swept over that sea of heads. At a late hour, Judge Skillott, his countenance stern and thoughtful, entered the room, and in an unassuming manner wedged through the crowd and took

Digitized by Google

his seat. The meeting was called to order and the Judge unanimously appointed chairman of the meeting. His remarks on taking the chair were calm, and deprecatory of violent measures. He did not wonder at the high state of feeling in the community. They had all been deeply injured in their feelings. Those we loved were stolen from the graves where their friends had laid them. A spot sacred in the affections of all who had lost kindred, had been repeatedly desecrated by the sacrilegious violence of grave robbers. It was to be regretted that such things should occur in the community. Justice to themselves, their reputation abroad, and to the graves of their dead, demanded that measures should be taken to put a stop to similar outrages.

As Skillott took his seat, Dr. Howard entered and stood in the passage in front. Skillott bent his stern gaze full upon that individual, and with so direct and meaning an expression, that the attention of the whole audience was drawn to the doctor. The latter was taken by surprise, and reddened at the insolent boldness of the man whom he had last seen under such peculiar circumstances. The Judge turned away, as much as to say, "Look to *that* man." And so thought the fickle crowd. Some of the sickly pallor passed away from the chairman's face, as he saw his plan for directing public attention upon the wrong scent working so favorably.

After a number of citizens had made remarks to the meeting, the chairman was called upon to give

Digitized by Google

some advice in the matter. He complied with the request with well-assumed reluctance. He stated what facts had come to his knowledge through others. He thought a committee should be appointed to make investigations, and report in the evening at that place. More facts than had yet come to light might probably be elicited. With prompt and energetic measures the body might be found. He hoped so, for Gerald Brayton was a friend whom he had cherished with great regard. The plan was adopted, and Skillott, after much urging, placed at the head of the committee of investigation.

Amazed at what he had seen, Doctor Howard had stood during the proceedings, lost in thought. As the meeting dispersed, he looked around for some one whom he had expected to see present, but was disappointed. As he turned he encountered the keen, half-sneering gaze of Skillott. There was a glitter of some unknown triumph in that restless eye.

"Now," said Skillott, as the committee prepared to proceed in their investigation, "you will remember that the soil in the burial ground is of a peculiar red, sticky kind. If we bear this in mind it may lead to some developments as to the robbers. They must have had *tools*, and have worn *boots or shoes*."

Having a patient to call upon, Howard left the village as the committee commenced their search.

The soil in the burial ground was soft and very adhesive from the effects of the thaw. The tracks of many individuals were plainly marked, especially

Digitized by Google

around the grave where Brayton had been buried. From there they were traced to the bank of the river, then down to the fence, and thence across the field to the edge of the village. There were evidently the tracks of two persons from the fence to the road, following each other.

"Why, if it were possible," suggested one of the citizens, "I should say that Doctor Howard had been here, or some boy. No *man* has so small a foot." Skillott said nothing.

The knife (a spring dirk) was found by a grave stone, and handed to the Judge. No other evidences were found to lead to a knowledge of the robbers. The grave was opened and the coffin found empty.

"Now, friends," said the judge, "it is quite certain that the body was taken across the field to the road and to the village. I should be sorry to find it in the possession of any of our own citizens. Yet the search must be thoroughly made."

The party again returned towards the village, closely scrutinizing every mark which might give them a clue to the course of the robbers. Arriving at Doctor Howard's residence, a halt was made.

"My friends," again remarked Skillott, "I regret that this unpleasant duty has fallen upon us. The innocent should not suffer unjust imputations. Here is the residence of Doctor Howard. He is a personal friend of mine, and I am anxious to have him cleared from all suspicion of having a hand in this sad affair. At the meeting this morning, I thought I saw a dis-

Digitized by Google

position to direct public attention to him as one concerned in this matter. As we are bound to do our whole duty, we will look over his premises, he being a doctor, and then he will not suffer from an impression so unjust."

On explanation, Mrs. Howard gave a ready consent to the search, she having full confidence that her husband knew nothing of the matter.

"It is n't much likely," carelessly remarked Skillott, as he put a short ladder up against the shed and climbed to the open door. His attention was attracted, and he looked down upon the rest of the crowd with apparent surprise and regret at what he had discovered. Hesitating a moment, he reached over upon the hay, and pulled down two shovels and a rope with an iron hook attached. There was blood upon the hook, and that peculiar red soil upon the shovels! There was a murmur of surprise by the bystanders, and Skillott slowly descended to the ground and retired to one side, thoughtful and sad.

"Gentlemen," said he at last, "I will not deny that these things annoy me — disappoint me. And it has just occurred to me that my position, in the event of a detection and trial, should induce me to have no more to do with this affair at the *present* stage of it. The rest of you will do your duty."

Many appreciated the Judge's delicacy in not wishing to learn of facts which should go against his friend. That innocent dignitary gave Jud Lane a meaning wink, and himself refrained from further search.

Digitized by Google

Under the hungry scent of Jud Lane, the hunt was continued. In the wood-shed a pair of boots were found, thickly coated with the red soil, and their size corresponding with the tracks across the fields. They were brought out and placed with the shovels. The office was open, but nothing was found there of the body. The wagon-house was locked. As the doctor had carried the key with him, it was determined to wrench off the staple; a thorough search, after what had been discovered, would alone satisfy the people.

In one of the farther stables, partially covered with straw, the body of Gerald Brayton was found, wrapped in a coarse blanket, and a rope fastened to the feet and under the arms, and the mark of the hook under the chin!

The crowd stood aghast! They had not yet believed that Doctor Howard was a body snatcher. His friends were sad and silent, while his many enemies, bitter against him as a radical temperance reformer, assumed sudden wisdom, and gravely expressed how long they had believed that all was not right.

As the body was taken into the yard, Howard drove in. Stepping up to the crowd which stood before the open door of the wagon-house, he somewhat excitedly inquired what it all meant. Not one answered, leaving him to see for himself. His eye rested upon the body, now divested of all but the shroud, as ghastly and bare it lay out upon the ground. The *stomach had been taken out of the corpse!*

Digitized by Google

This is sad, Doctor,—a sad business, which none of all your numerous friends will regret more than myself."

"What do you mean, Judge Skillott?" fiercely demanded Howard, looking searchingly in the Judge's face.

"I mean what I say, Doctor. Appearances are against you in this matter. The present excited state of public feeling will damage your case, I fear."

"Black-hearted, unblushing villain!" ground the Doctor between his teeth, as he began to comprehend the strength of the meshes which his enemy had woven around him, "no one knows more of this matter than yourself and your associate in wickedness."

"You are excited, Doctor, and I will not bandy words with you," calmly replied the Judge. "It does not become my position. It remains to be seen who knows the most of this matter. Officer Gaston, do your duty." The huge blacksmith, with honest embarrassment, stepped forth to arrest Howard, looking more like a culprit than did the Doctor.

"Friends," said the latter in a calm tone, "I see through this worse than fiendish scheme. The right will yet triumph." But Howard's heart sank within him, as he saw the skeptical countenances around him. With pale and compressed lip, he turned, in company with Gaston, and ahead of the crowd, passed into the village, after a brief and touching parting with his wife. He assured her of his innocence, and told her to be of good cheer. The noble man little

Digitized by Google

knew how deeply laid were the plans of his relentless enemy. Had he been a cannibal just imported, his own immediate acquaintances could not have stared at him with a more morbid curiosity. Those whom he had counted strong friends, turned coldly away. Those to whose families he had often dispensed with a liberal hand, turned to rend him. His name was covered with infamy, and summary punishment invoked upon his crime. Howard's noble spirit was grieved at such treatment, for he knew his innocence of the revolting crime laid to his charge, and he felt that others ought to know as much.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXX.

ANOTHER VICTIM IN THE NET — THE WICKED STILL TRIUMPH.

UNDER pretence of satisfying public opinion, Howard's bail was fixed at an unreasonable sum by Judge Skillott. The latter affirmed that he had no doubt of the Doctor's honor; but the charge was a serious one, and the community had a right to thorough measures. It was now that Howard felt more keenly the base ingratitude of those who had fawned around him. Those to whom he confidently looked for aid, by one consent began to make excuses and left him. At this juncture a wealthy citizen, with whom he had often differed with much warmth, promptly came forward on learning the facts, and offered himself as bail. There could be no dispute about his ability, and, after some frivolous objections, he was accepted. Howard was satisfied that his failure to procure bail would have been more agreeable. In silence he pressed the hand of his unexpected friend, and went sadly homeward, wondering at the hollow nature of the friendships which he had supposed so true. The prosperous and the powerful always have friends. They vanish under the test of adverse circumstances.

Digitized by Google

A "body-snatcher!" Such was the term Doctor Howard heard whispered as he went about. Curious faces were seen peering from the windows as he passed, and children actually shunned him on the walk. He felt like one branded with infamy. His business was ruined at a blow, and he fled to his own fireside for that sympathy and kindness so grateful to one of his sensitive nature. He there found a friend who clung the closer as others deserted.

Walter Brayton did not return to Oakvale until several days after the exciting events just narrated. Skillott managed to see him first, and, as a *friend*, related all the circumstances of the case, adroitly coloring the statement so as to secure his own strong hold upon Walter's mind, and at the same time leave a deep impression there against Doctor Howard. The latter frankly demanded an opportunity of speaking to Walter, but under advice, the proposition was almost insultingly refused. The circumstances were so strong against the Doctor, that Brayton allowed no doubt of his guilt to cross his mind.

Alas! what a change was there in Walter Brayton. He had fallen like a meteor from his former high position. The false light of political ambition had lured him into the damning corruptions of party management. Fast wedded to the new idol, he was easily led to believe that the only chance for success was by abandoning his ultra temperance notions, and becoming more liberal in his sentiments and habits. Skillott was his teacher, as well as was the universal cus-

Digitized by Google

tom of party management. He must make himself popular, by visiting and treating at the taverns and groceries. Upon that large class which followed such practices, depended the balance of power. Such a course was pursued by all politicians of both parties, which justified it in others. The liberal expectant was made to understand that the taverns and groceries controlled the caucuses, and after the nominations, thousands of votes. If they were not put under pay, their influence would not be secured. Brayton felt all this, and yielded too willingly to its seeming necessity. The office he wanted, and he must do as others did to secure it. From an occasional glass of beer with a squad of tippling voters, he rapidly passed to more potent liquors. As election approached, the descent became more easy and rapid. He dreamed only of drinking, and after election resumed his old habits of temperance. The course was fatal! The floodgate once up, the Niagara tide swept in, and while the young man's eyes were riveted upon the glare of the coveted position, its silent wave bore him more swiftly away—he knew not how swiftly. From many a political mass-meeting he was carried home *drunk!* Who could once have believed it of Walter Brayton!

Walter secured the nomination for Congress, after a hard-contested strife. Funds were scattered liberally, and meetings held throughout the District. He treated liberally, and drank himself. It would not do to flinch, for such was the custom.

Digitized by Google

There were undercurrents in the progress of the canvass, unexpected and inexplicable to Brayton. Reports, most cunningly calculated to injure, were circulated in every direction. They finally appeared in handbills and in the opposition newspaper. He was charged with abusing his father before he died, and of threatening to kill him if he did not make over half of the legacy, and of compounding with those who stole the old man's body. He was reported as a gambler and a drunkard — as accomplishing the ruin of Minnie Hermon, etc. etc. Brayton felt these blows, but could obtain no clue to their authorship. They were all cunningly devised, and most perseveringly circulated. Brayton was defeated by *twenty-seven votes!* The result was a bolt from a clear sky; for he had confidently looked for a majority of eight or nine hundred, even with all the unexpected influences against him. At one fell swoop, his fabric came crashing about his ears. He was disgraced with his party; his money was gone, and he in debt. Walter was a pitiful wreck. The sudden and sweeping character of his fall utterly astounded — crushed him. He saw no redemption, and shunned the public gaze, plunging with all the strength of his impetuous nature into dissipation to drown his reflections. That was a strange spectacle — the wreck of such a man in so brief a space of time — and as sad as strange. Halton and a few of his former friends made earnest efforts to arrest him in his mad career, but he sullenly repelled them all. Alone, the yet lingering

Digitized by Google

currents of his nobler, better manhood came throbbing back, and he wept, and attempted to realize the change which had come upon him. He groped in the dark. His proud spirit at times rebelled, and the talons of the eagle clutched and wrenched at the galling iron; but the demon enthroned within him aroused, and bade him to the dramshop. Dismasted, and no true hand at the helm, a once noble craft was drifting madly to destruction. He who had raised a false light on the dark shore, had cut the cable, and was now rejoicing in his work.

A few weeks after his defeat he received a letter from the post-office, written upon the back of an old letter with a pencil, the place and date obliterated:

"WALTER BRAYTON: Beware of the adder's fang. Judge Skillott and John Hermon poisoned your father and *forged* the will, and attempted to steal the body to hide their guilt. Heed the truth and *beware*.

"A FRIEND IN PRISON AND CHAINS."

It was early in the morning when he received the mysterious note, and his head throbbed over its contents. Did the note reveal the truth? How came his father to will all his property to Skillott? Was Skillott a villain? Such, and a thousand kindred questions flashed like shocks across his brain. He now remembered Minnie Hermon's warning, and reasoned of the probabilities of Skillott's proving a knave. It was difficult to believe it—he had shown

Digitized by Google

so much interest in his welfare. The strange note had awakened a new train of thought, and for the day Walter determined not to drink a drop.

The more he thought of the matter the more unreasonable it appeared to him that his father should have borrowed so much money of Skillott, or that he should have voluntarily, just at such a juncture, willed all his property to that individual. With these thoughts fastening more strongly upon his mind, Walter determined to call upon Skillott and charge him directly with fraud in the matter. He began to feel astonished that he had ever been made to believe that his father had borrowed five thousand dollars of Skillott; for the Judge had never been supposed to be worth half that sum, and he was not a man to lend money to those who, like Brayton at the time stated, had nothing to pay. How fatally had a strong and naturally keen mind been blinded by the powerful influences of rum and political ambition.

Brayton had at once found an object to fix his attention, and arouse the energies of his nature. The bondage of his besetting vice once broken, those energies would recover all their original strength. The more he thought over the improbabilities of Skillott's statement about the will, the more he believed that his father came to his death by violence.

Clear and burning as the noonday sun, Walter saw why, and how deeply he had fallen. He shuddered as all the humiliating facts rushed in before his clearer vision, and a quick glow burned hotly over his cheek.

Digitized by Google

He staggered with the racking intensity of his thoughts. Sharp, rapid and piercing, they shot like barbed lightnings into his heart, until he clasped his throbbing temples to beat back the pain. Then and now! Walter Brayton as he was two years before, and Walter Brayton the penniless drunkard! Involuntarily he leaned over and looked down into the vortex which his heated imagination opened before him, where the lost writhed and howled in their infernal orgies. The wail, the curse, and the unearthly ha! ha! came fearfully distinct upon his ear. Upturned to his gaze was one who wore the semblance of his own features, peering sadly from the cloudy gloom, thick drops of blood standing upon the swollen flesh, and the limbs wrapped in the slimy coils of a huge reptile, the eye of a findish glitter, the white fangs bared, and the red tongue glancing by the cheek. He shut his eyes as the vision swam before him, but he heard a low hiss. He started, but with eye distended and glassy again looked down into the gloom. He saw the head of the serpent sway backwards and forwards, the eye still upon him, gradually dissolving like mist, and again assuming shape. The features that now swayed were those of Skillott, though the same eye and white fang, and glancing tongue, were there.

As he looked, the face of him in the tightening coils assumed his father's features — white, ghastly, and the foam and blood welling from the mouth. The cold sweat gathered damp and clammy upon Walter, but he could not turn away from the horrid vision.

Digitized by Google

Once he heard a low rush, and a shadowy form with wings swept slowly between him and the spectacle — the pale and beautiful countenance turned towards him, and the eye melting with sadness, as she beckoned him to come away. That was his mother. Another came, still more sad — tears lingered on either cheek. That was Minnie Hermon; and the drunkard wept as the familiar shade hovered within reach. With the energy of a drowning man, Walter grasped at the extended hand. There was a wild, unearthly howl, and the serpent leaped upon the angel forms. Walter heard the violent hissing and the gnashing of fangs, and then a low sound of weeping died away in the distance. The form first seen in the serpent's grasp had been liberated, while the monster had driven the winged shadows away. It still looked up to Walter — his own image — and begged piteously for help. But while that despairing eye still looked, the serpent returned, and slowly, coil upon coil, again bound the body to the throat. The countenance of Skillott still swayed, and sneered, and hissed, upon the arched and scaly neck. Again, he saw a fresh grave in the old church-yard, and by the side of it sat a huge monster feasting upon his human carrion. The face of the dead was turned to his view, and was the same he had seen, with its deathly agony and foam-covered mouth. It was by his father's grave; and still new and horrible sights crowded upon him. Looming up in the distant gloom, was an altar, and a blood-red light slowly spreading its dull glare upon

Digitized by Google

the damp atmosphere. Upon it were human forms of all ages. With the throat gashed to the spine, a manly frame lay consuming. The mother and her child were there — the young bride, the jewel upon her finger glancing like a star in the half-revealed gloom, and her tresses of wavy black matted in the ebbing blood of the suicide husband. Some of the features were ghastly with disease, and pinched with want and anguish. Demons there gathered to the foul feast — the silence startled by the sounds of their infernal revelry. From grated windows the felon and the maniac looked out upon the scene, and serpents slimed up the scaffold, and fed upon its shrouded tribute. Slowly the monster first seen glided away, and as he looked again, it had wrapped the corpse upon the scaffold, its head still swaying, and its eye upon him. Walter saw himself in the shroud. He was again startled by the hiss at his ear, its breath burning like a flame upon his skin. He could not stir to escape. The nightmare of madness was upon him, while ten thousand devilish forms glided towards him. His tongue became forked, and he felt the snaky fangs in his mouth. His head swayed on a scaly neck, and he felt the cold, slimy folds of innumerable serpents weaving their scaly web around him. He answered hiss for hiss, and gnashed his fangs as they did. Each finger grew a swaying head with glittering eye. They crept through his veins. His hair writhed in matted locks. The scaffold and the altar, with their blood-red flame, came nearer and nearer, the rope

Digitized by Google

changing to a serpent, the arched neck bearing the same likeness as that at first seen. Then came once more the angel shadows, silently and tearfully beckoning him away. Springing convulsively to reach the outstretched hand, he plunged forward, with one wild, agonizing wail for help.

. . . . . .

It was a fierce struggle which Walter Brayton had passed through. In the horrible delirium of the drunkard's madness, he had leaped through the window of the room he called his office, out upon the sidewalk, and fortunately for him, was first seen by Halton, who happened to be passing at the time. Without slumber, the frame was torn with torment for long days and nights. On one side were his friends, on the other, death. None who have once seen a victim cursed with the drunkard's madness, will ever wish to look upon the like again. No human pen can describe it, but its scenes will burn into the eyeball so deeply that they never pass away. For the time being, all the dread enginery of hell is planted in the victim's brain, and he subjected to its terrible torment.

But Walter's friends were true. Their efforts and the strength of a good constitution triumphed in the conflict, and pale and trembling, he once more stood upon his feet, the ordeal remaining like the fearful shadow of a horrible dream. He now doubted his own strength, and leaned upon his friends. From them he received tears and kind words, and felt a heart-throb in every palm. With them he went to

Digitized by Google

the Division Room, and became a Son of Temperance—a society just organized in Oakvale. He passed from darkness to light. He felt the shackles falling from his soul and limbs, and again stood up in the dignity of his manhood. His hands were wet with tears when he was greeted by his brothers. With a throat full of emotion and a swimming eye, he returned the greeting. The beautiful and sublime obligations had fallen upon his parched spirit like the summer shower, and the greenness of his heart again bloomed; for it was a burning crater no more. The tempest-tossed was moored in still waters. Walter found himself among those with whom he had before labored. Some of them had been saved by his eloquence, and they now stood around, rejoiced to save him. He was called out with more than old-fashioned enthusiasm to make some remarks. He arose, and stood for a full moment, but could not utter a word. That silence was more eloquent than words! Not one link in that band of brothers that night, which did not glisten to a pure and holy tear. Arm in arm with Halton, Walter passed out of the Division. The cool night air was like a calm kiss upon his cheek. He felt like a new man — that Walter Brayton was a drunkard no more! The thought was unutterable joy. He looked out upon those around him, and up to the clear blue sky. Every star seemed a beacon which smiled like an angel's eye. The sky looked bluer and the stars brighter. His own heart was stronger and holier, and he went to his humble room

Digitized by Google

with a steady and manly tread. His friends would have persuaded him to go with them, but he wished to be alone. In the still solitude of his room he knelt down till hours went by. No words dropped from his lips, but every heart-throb beat up against Heaven with its freight of gratitude, and ebbed back with a blessed light upon its crest. A dark ocean was behind him — a brighter future before. He thought of his mother and — yes — Minnie Hermon. The strong heart was broken up, and a warm flood of tears sealed the compact with himself, his mother in Heaven, and God. With none but the stars to look down upon him, he passed out into the silent streets, and walked another hour to make sure that his limbs were free.

— Walter Brayton was saved!

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE SECRET OUT — A FATAL WAGER.

Bitter sorrow was surging in the old heart of the Widow Weston, and the pleasant chiming of the Sabbath bells was unheeded by her. Her bowed frame was bitterly convulsed with agony too keen for the old to suffer. A regulated curse had slimed her hearth, and left her a drunken son and unutterable woe. Tears too bitter and scalding for the innocent to shed, were crushed out by an iron heel, and dripped their way down the withered cheek.

Colonel Weston had been the very soul of honor. He was a gentleman and a nobleman by nature. He was magnanimous to a fault, generous, affable, upright, and genial-hearted. He was a friend of the poor, the stay and pride of his widowed mother, a tower of strength in his party, and an ornament to the social circle.

The rum business of Oakvale had swept under the stalwart oak, and the lordly trunk lay prostrate. The generous and great-hearted Weston had become a drunkard. The blow seemed more than the widow could bear. With her dim eyes wet with tears she had pleaded with men that he might be spared to her

Digitized by Google

in her last days. She had wrestled with God, and yet the storm beat unchecked upon her hearth.

On the morning we have introduced the Widow Weston to the reader, she had felt that she could suffer no more. Had he been brought home dead and no stain upon him, she would not have murmured at the stroke, though that stroke swept away all. But at daylight he had been brought home drunk, and placed helpless upon her bed. Her heart would rebel; she did not curse God, but she cursed men. Why must the only link left her of her kindred upon the earth, be thus cruelly wrenched away and broken, and her home filled with desolation? Why should *she* be robbed of an only son late in the evening of her life? The doctrine that a removal of dramshops would prove unconstitutional and infringe upon the natural liberties of men, had never entered the poor old widow's mind! She felt the rough iron in her inmost soul, feathered by government and sped by a licensed hand. She could not wrench it out. Could she have done so, another and another, from a never exhausting quiver, would have entered the same wound. Poor Niobes — the wives and mothers of our land — they cannot shield a single heart from the remorseless hunters. *They* have bought of government, for a price, the blood of the victims, and the victims must be slain. On their carrion the agents of the State grow fat, entering the wretched homes and sitting by the hearth at their lawful feast of ruin and death. We cannot wonder that those who feel

Digitized by Google

all this weight of woe, do not comprehend the justice or necessity of that policy which is the producing cause. They have not yet learned that the red plowshare of ruin which rips up their hearthstones, is so regulated as to be harmless and constitutional.

With many misgivings, Mrs. Weston had consented to the mortgage of the old homestead, for the purpose of procuring funds for her son to engage in business in Oakvale. She could not see it all clear, when he told her that there was no harm in engaging in the wholesale liquor business. The step was a fatal one, as she feared from the first. Weston found his partner a sharper, and the funds he put into the establishment were soon swallowed up. In a few months he found himself a bankrupt, and arrested at the instigation of his partner, on a charge of obtaining property under false pretences, because he had mortgaged the homestead, on which his mother had a life-lease. These results, combined with habits previously formed, and greatly increased during the business, utterly prostrated Weston's proud spirit. His pride was stung. That nice sense of honor and high tone of feeling which were so characteristic of the man, could not brook his reverses, and his firmness gave way to his besetting vice. He became reckless and yielded to rum and its kindred evils. Yet, to the last of his career, he never forgot the poor; and a cloud of charities unseen by the public eye, were dispensed from a hand trembling with the drunkard's premature palsy.

Digitized by Google

When Colonel Weston entered the rum business in Oakvale, the editor of the new temperance paper just started, alluded to the enterprise, and wondered that a man of so much intelligence and real nobleness of heart should engage in so disreputable a business. Colonel Weston was induced to believe that the plain-spoken editor was an enemy, and always met him coldly. As they passed each other one afternoon, Weston reeling, Brantford, the editor, turned to watch his steps. For some reason, Weston had also turned to notice his supposed enemy, and their eyes met.

"Colonel Weston, how are you?" said Brantford, impulsively stepping forward and offering his hand. Weston looked indignant.

"Well enough. Why should *you* ask?" drawing himself proudly up.

"Because I am your friend."

"You are an enemy, sir, and I cannot give you my hand."

"Weston, I am *not* your enemy. God knows I am a friend. Will you not believe it?"

"How can I?" still withholding his hand.

"Colonel Weston," answered Brantford, in tones low and tremulous with emotion, "look in my eye, and let your own heart tell you whether Thomas Brantford is an enemy!" Brantford was a bold, plain-spoken, honest temperance reformer; but under his unassuming exterior, beat a heart as warm and true towards his fellow-man, as ever battled for his good. He still stood with his hand extended, and his

Digitized by Google

usually dull eye flooded with tears. Weston looked steadily, astonished that he had known so little of the real character of the much-belied editor. The eye told the truth. Weston's lip quivered as he looked, his own red eyes filling until they overflowed.

"And you are a friend of mine!" he eagerly exclaimed. "Why should you be?" grasping the extended hand firmly in his own.

"I am a friend to every noble, high-minded man. I know of none towards whom I feel more friendly than yourself. You have quite misunderstood me, Colonel."

"I feel — I know that I have, but I did not think it! But," and he hesitated, as he dropped his eyes to the walk, "I do not deserve your friendship; I am not high-minded and noble. Weston is — my God! that he should ever be compelled to say it! — is degraded!"

"Enough, Colonel; I know all that, as an honest man, you would say. Let the past go. You have a host of friends yet."

"*Friends!*" Weston bitterly replied, as if lost in thought. "They were not friends. They all shun the penniless ———, God! Brantford, I can't say it."

"I know all. You need not say it. Don't let the world say it longer. I can find friends who will stand by you."

"*Where?*" I did not suppose I had more than one friend, my — my mother. God knows I do not deserve her — the best, yet most deeply injured."

Digitized by Google

"She never deserts, Colonel. Go to her. If it were necessary, I would give this arm," laying the left hand upon the right shoulder, "to send you back to her all that you once were." Weston wrung Brantford's hand fiercely, but his features were now black with despair.

"That would do no good. *I am lost!* You do not know how deeply I have fallen. I am disgraced and penniless. Worse than that: I have well nigh beggared my mother. No, no; it's of no use. I can't be saved; I am not worth saving. The quicker I am dead the better. I cannot live so."

"But your mother! She needs you."

"There 'tis again. She is now heart-broken. It will be cruel — to weep over the grave of her drunken child! Merciful God! were this demon driven out, and I what I once was — what you now are, Brantford—and knew that she would shed her holy tears for a sober child in his grave, I would joy to be drawn into quarters — I would die a thousand deaths. To die a *drunkard!*" and the strong man sobbed convulsively. "O how dark an end is that! They will write it on the stone, 'Colonel Weston died a *drunkard!*' And that other world — you believe in the future, Brantford — what of that? All dark and hopeless! But," and he looked eagerly into Brantford's face, "they won't sell me rum there, will they? My hell is bad enough now!"

His manner was wild, desperate, hopeless. Brant-

Digitized by Google

ford plead long and earnestly, but Weston would make no promise.

"Good-bye, my friend — I know you are such. If you do not see me again, tell others to shun my footsteps. I have tried my teeth in vain upon my fetters. There is not a dealer in the village who will not sell me rum while I have money to pay for it. Remember my — you know who — my—

"*Mother?*"

"Yes. I cannot; it is too holy a word for me to speak. Had I listened to her counsel, I should not have been thus. But it matters not; it will soon be over. Good-bye!"

Brantford watched Weston until he turned down the street and was out of sight. From that night's revel he was carried home as we have seen him at the commencement of the chapter. As Mrs. Weston knelt over his form and brushed the matted locks from the brow, and imprinted a kiss upon the parched lips, she found the brand of the curse between her and her child. The fumes of rum polluted the lips, and went down like a dark cloud into her soul. The kisses which had been sealed upon the pure lips of childhood, had been burned away by the fiery flood of intemperance.

Two weeks later, Thomas Brantford sat at the table of Mrs. Weston, and the subject of the new temperance organization was introduced.

"I suppose," remarked the widow, as she laid her

Digitized by Google

hand upon the tea-pot, "that you are a Son of Temperance?"

"I am," was the unhesitating answer.

"Your Order, as you call it, I believe, is a secret society, is it not, Mr. Brantford?"

"As I understand the term, it is not."

"But you do not admit every one, do you?"

"Certainly not; but our members are all known, as is the place where we assemble, and our object—that is openly avowed."

"You have some ceremonies, I suppose?"

"We have. But none but what God himself could approve, if properly conducted. They are simple, pure and impressive."

"But you are bound by your oaths not to reveal the secret, whatever it is?"

"We have no oaths, and no secrets which we should be ashamed to have the world know, so far as their character is concerned. The pledge of an honorable man is our strongest obligation."

"You do deny that your society is a secret one, then?"

"Why, to be sure, we have some business matters that are kept secret, as it is termed. It is necessary that they should be kept so. They concern none but ourselves, and the business we oppose."

"If I should tell you the secret, Mr. Brantford, would you frankly acknowledge it?"

"Why, as to that, Mrs. Weston, we are obligated not to reveal any of the private affairs of the Order."

Digitized by Google

"Just as I thought. You *have* secrets, then, which you dare not — are bound not to reveal."

"If you had promised to keep a neighbor's secret, would you reveal it, though there should be no oath in the matter? Or, if something occurred in your family which you felt had better be kept to yourself, would you feel that you were doing wrong to do so?"

"Not a whit, Mr. Brantford. But there has something occurred. I have a secret which I want you to know."

"You will probably violate no obligation in revealing it?"

"No, I am under obligation rather, to out with it. And, sir, I will make you, Son as you are, own the secret of your Order."

"It may be."

The tea was smoking in the cups, but so earnestly had the conversation been carried on, that neither had yet commenced eating. Mrs. Weston wiped her glasses, and in a more serious tone began:

"I need not tell you, Mr. Brantford, about the history of the past. You know the Colonel — you know it all. He is my only child. A mother may be partial, I know; but I may say that, aside from the fearful habit which has so grown upon him, he is all that a mother could wish. He is the only one left me to love — the idol of my old age. You are aware of his habits; but you know nothing of the sorrow they have wrought for me. I cannot tell it, and God only knows it. I have loved the boy with all the bound-

Digitized by Google

less depth of a mother's love, and have leaned upon him as my feeble steps have neared the grave. I have prayed, and plead, and wept, and suffered on, until it seemed that my poor heart could bear no more. Oh, it is cruel to receive harsh language from a child so loved. See here!" and she bared her withered arm, "here is a secret which you will not reveal. Three weeks ago, while intoxicated, he struck me, and the blow entered my very soul. It is hard, Mr. Brantford, to have a blow from such a hand — hard." She leaned back in her chair, and wiped the tears from under her glasses. "You remember," she continued, how he was brought home two Sabbaths ago, and his severe sickness. Night before last, two strangers came and inquired for him. My heart fluttered, and I know I was short with them; but really, I feared they were some of his drinking companions, and I dreaded the worst. They were courteous, however, and I showed them into his room. I grew more suspicious as they closed the door behind them and entered into conversation. You will forgive me, Mr. Brantford, but I could *not* help watching them through the keyhole. I was determined that, if they were his tavern companions, he should not leave the house with them. My son was sitting on the bed with tears in his eyes, and one of the strangers each side of him. I saw them shake hands, and then the strangers went out. To all my anxious inquiries, I could get no answer. Last night the same individuals came again, and my son commenced putting on his things to leave with

Digitized by Google

them. With a sad but strong heart, I placed my hand upon his arm, and looked beseechingly in his eye. 'I must go, Mother,' (he answered me kindly,) 'it is business of importance; but I will be home early.' They passed out, and I turned away to pray. I wrestled with God, and my prayers were answered. About ten o'clock I heard footsteps on the walk, and my heart grew still with dread. Thank the good God, Mr. Brantford, they were steady. The door was thrown open, and my son stood upon the threshold. It seemed as though I should sink as I watched him; but my heart bounded with new hope — he was not *drunk!* No, Mr. Brantford, he wasn't *drunk!* Coming towards me, he put his arms around my neck as he used to when a child, and I felt the warm tears as he kissed me again and again. I was so happy, Mr. Brantford!" and again she wept in silence. "At last he said, 'Mother, my own deeply injured mother, can you ever forgive me? Look on me now. I am sober. Yes, Mother, I am free. *Hear that!* free, and a man once more. I'll love you now as I once did, and you shall love me again. Will you not, my Mother? We will forget the dark past. You shall dry your tears and be happy again. No more sorrow here — no more unkindness. God forgive me, Mother! but I will not strike you again. I will be all that a son should be to so good a parent — my only one. Look up! Mother, I am a Son of Temperance! Don't that make your old heart glad?' I knelt down, and it seemed to me that my heart never so went out in

Digitized by Google

prayer to God for so much good. My son still clung to my hand, and when I arose, I noticed that the two strangers had entered, and were kneeling, also. My son is saved; and O! I am *so* happy. Now, Mr. Brantford, I have found out the secret of your Order. It is to meet the returning prodigal, and to restore him to those who mourn for him as one lost, and make old hearts and homes happy. Isn't that it?" Brantford raised his head from his hand, and with a wet cheek, replied with a monosyllable.

"And may the widow's God prosper the Order in all lands," fervently ejaculated Mrs. Weston.

While Colonel Weston was engaged in the liquor business, one of his peddlers had sold liquor to a tavern-keeper in a village upon the canal. After much solicitation from the assignees, he consented to go and collect the bill.

Weston reached the village on Friday night, and put out his horse at the tavern where the liquor had been sold. A company, of questionable character, was assembled for a dance. Somewhat at a loss for something to amuse himself about, Weston thought he would dance one figure, and then retire to his bed. He danced again and again, liquor in the meantime flowing freely above and below. After refusing to drink several times, he was taunted by one of the managers with a disposition to "sneak," and not stand his part. This was touching Weston in a tender point — and besides, the smell and presence of the liquor— the gurgling sound, the jingle of glasses, and the

Digitized by Google

drumming of the toddy-stick, had aroused the not-yet weakened enemy in his bosom. Excited and wavering, he thought he would drink slightly and get out of the scrape.

An hour later, and Weston was mad with rum. He alternately drank and danced until morning. The bar-room was crowded, and the revel continued there. While the company were drinking around, as they called it, a notorious young sot came in from the village, and took a part. He had already squandered a fortune of forty-thousand dollars, left him by his father. This young man, whom we will call Hoover, finally gave Weston a challenge. He said he could drink any man drunk from Oakvale. Weston was in just the mood to accept the wager, and did so. The bar was left wholly to the contestants, and Monongahela whisky produced for the trial. With that disposition to be honorable and fair, characteristic of the man, Colonel Weston every time poured out the two glasses, and gave Hoover his choice. They kept up the strife until they had drank nearly a quart each. Twice in that time, Hoover, as usual with him on such sprees, had stolen out, and there threw his liquor from the stomach, while Weston would have scorned such an act.

Two more glasses stood ready on the counter, and Hoover was asked to take his choice. He turned his liquor off with a steady hand. Weston took his in a trembling grasp, and, drinking but a portion of it, set the glass heavily down and turned away. But

Digitized by Google

no hand was reached in to guide him out from that band of jeering devils. He was sneered and hissed at for yielding. His pride was touched, and he turned, grasped the glass with both hands, turned the contents all off, and with a sickly smile upon his countenance, fell heavily forward upon the bar-room floor, *dead!* He was carried out and rolled for the purpose of getting the liquor out of his stomach. While undergoing this process, Hoover stole his money from his pocket!

Weston was carried into an upper room, and without a friend to watch or a mother to weep, left while the revel went on below. There lay the corpse, the eyes glaring, the arms flung out, and the liquor welling up and out of the distorted mouth,— there, on Sabbath morning, and in the bar-room below were forty-two drunken revelers! The tavern was under the usual regulations as per law!

The news of Weston's death was broken tenderly to his mother.

"My son dead! How did he die, Mr. Holley; tell me, how did he die?"

"He died in a fit, I believe."

"God Almighty be thanked for that," she sobbed, as she locked her hands together and turned her streaming eyes upward. "Yes, I thank God for that. Though my all is taken away, yet he did not die a *drunkard!*"

Mr. Holley and the friends believed it would be kindness to keep the truth from Mrs. Weston. Brant-

Digitized by Google

ford did not give them in his paper. But the widow learned the particulars at last, and the wound of his death bled deeper than at first.

"God forgive me, but I curse them. They killed my son, and I curse them. Why did that man give him drink? Had he come at night and shot my boy at my hearth, I could have knelt down and blessed him. But he killed him — he killed him! O God! this is bitter indeed, and hard to bear. Now give me the rest of the grave, for all is dark to me."

The stricken woman swayed and sobbed in the old arm chair, and found the heart yet full of its scalding flood, every drop more bitter than ever before.

— Mrs. Weston still lingers at the homestead, her gray hairs going down in sorrow to the grave. The *property* value of a quart of Monongahela whisky was saved by the rum-dealer, a defenceless, unoffending old woman robbed of her only son, and society of a talented and noble-minded citizen! It would have been tyrannical and unconstitutional to have destroyed that quart of liquor; but it was all right and legal and constitutional to destroy a man like Colonel Weston, and wring his mother's heart with worse than savage torture!

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXXII.

A GROUPING OF SCENES.

Among those who regretted Walter Brayton's reform was Skillott; for new fuel had been added to the hatred of the latter. Walter had called upon him and made inquiries in relation to the Will, and about the money which the Judge pretended that the elder Brayton had borrowed. The inquiry was unwelcome, and the searching tone in which it was made was suggestive to the suspicions of the uneasy dignitary; and he answered tartly, and intimated that he did not wish to hear any more about the matter from one who was ungrateful and ready to be put up to abuse him when he had done so much for him. This language aroused Brayton, for he had learned of Skillott's treachery in the canvass at the time he was up for Congress, and he charged the Judge with being the author of the slanders, and the cause of his defeat. Hot words ensued, and Brayton openly charged him with defrauding his father, if not guilty of a still worse crime against the old man. The quarrel was a bitter one, the manner and language of Skillott going far to convince Walter that there were good grounds for his suspicions. Late on the evening after

Digitized by Google

the meeting of Brayton and Skillott, the latter was closeted with Hermon at the Home, in low and earnest conversation. The unscrupulous Judge was not yet safe from those whom he had wronged. Guilt must be shielded with guilt.

On the evening in question, a drover had put up at the Home, the other hotels being full during the County Fair. The man had passed down to New-York a few weeks before, with a very large drove of cattle, and was now on his return. In the course of the evening he drank freely, and insisted on treating frequently the numerous company around him. As he became intoxicated he was communicative, and disposed to boast of his means, and display the large amounts of money he had with him. Lane, who was now in partnership with Hermon, was one of the most forward in urging the old man to drink. Towards midnight the drover was carried to the back chamber and put in bed. Soon after, the lights in the Home were all extinguished, and the house closed for the night.

On this day Minnie Hermon had found new ingredients mingled in her bitter cup. From some cause or other, Hermon had been induced to be the bearer of a base proposition to his own daughter, from Skillott. Minnie looked into the drunkard's face with astonishment too deep for utterance. She could hardly believe that she heard aright as she stood with her lips apart and colorless as marble. As the full import of her father's words slowly came to her un

Digitized by Google

derstanding, the blood came quick and hot to her cheek, and her languid eye kindled with fire.

"And this language from my father!" she passionately exclaimed. "Great God! has it come to this! John Hermon, are you so imbruted with rum as to breathe such baseness to an only child? Is it true? Or is it a horrible dream? Tell me it is false, Father. I can die for you, for I promised my mother to cling to you; but this is horrible. Unsay the cruel words or you will kill me."

Hermon answered with a brutal laugh, telling her that she might as well be the mistress of a judge as of a long-coated hypocrite.

"John Hermon," she gasped, with vehemence, "were I man and you less than a father, I would resent such language as this. God knows I am not deserving of such treatment from you."

"Why, Min., the Judge loves you."

"It's a *lie*, father! He has already insulted me in our own house."

"Come, now, don't be (hic) silly; the fact is, we are under some obligations — ahem — to the Judge."

"No obligations on earth should induce a father to harbor one moment such thoughts as you have uttered to me."

"I — I — (hic) I don't like to offend him, you know, and—"

"*Craven!* and you would listen to him rather than to offend him, and then stoop to retail his baseness. John Hermon would not have so stooped once!"

Digitized by Google

"Take care, Miss; you don't know it all. You may be sorry if you treat (hic) the Judge disrespectfully. I — the fact is — I owe him."

"And you would sell *me* to a human monster! Father, I have borne with disgrace, and the desertion of friends — with violence at your hands. I can bear still, but never a word more of what you have now whispered — and do you hear? — I *will* not. I will die, and be at rest with my sainted mother."

"There 'tis — sainted mother, again. I've told you enough, you hussy, to stop such d———d nonsense. Take that for your impudence; I am not so drunk as not to rule in my own house," and he glared upon the girl as she reeled under his heavy blow. "And see here, Miss, none of your sauce to Skillott," he concluded, as he turned away.

How the blow burned on the wasted cheek! Others had preceded it, hurting the swollen heart more than the flesh. In her room, Minnie wept herself into calm despair, and prayed for death. "Oh, my mother," she exclaimed, "why did you bind me to a fate like this?"

Minnie could think of no one to whom she could tell her troubles, or look for protection, and she feared the time might come when she would need the strong arm of a friend. She thought of one who was now a stranger, but her true woman's heart rejoiced at the news of his reformation. Halton was her friend — she would call on him, for if the worst came, she must have some place to flee. Even as she that night

Digitized by Google

passed up the stairs, Lane had placed himself before her room door with an insulting leer. Where was the Hermit all this time, she wondered, as she threw on her hood, determined to visit Halton's even at that late hour — a presentiment of coming ill preventing her from seeking slumber.

As she stood at the head of the stairs, listening to learn if there were any persons up in the house, she was startled by the careful opening of the bar-room door, and the stealthy steps of two individuals upon the bottom steps. Fearing that she could not reach her own room in time, she stepped through the doorway into the back chamber, not knowing that there was any one within. Her fears were increased as those whom she had heard followed her through the doorway into the room. There was a dark closet made of rough boards, between the wall and the chimney, with a narrow door hung upon leathers. Minnie entered this, awaiting the departure of the intruders, or an opportunity of stealing out unheard. She could plainly hear the whispering of two persons, and immediately she noticed a beam of light in the closet. As it entered through a knot hole in the rude partition just below the latch, she could, by stooping, observe all that occurred in the room. She was surprised to see some one on the bed asleep, and before it her father and Lane, a candle, pail, and a blanket which they proceeded to hang before the window, after Lane had carefully turned the key in the door. The latter act precluded all possibility of her present

Digitized by Google

escape from her unpleasant position. The two held a brief consultation in low whispers, but they were so near her place of concealment that she heard all that was said.

"You are sure he wont wake?" asked Hermon.

"Sure, I tell you," replied Lane, "for the dose was a big one."

Minnie shuddered as the words assumed a significant meaning, but more as she saw them pull off their coats and roll their shirt sleeves above the elbows, Lane having a large, broad-bladed knife in his hand. The candle slightly trembled in her father's hand, and even Lane's face, desperado as he was, was paler than she had ever seen it before. She dreaded some fearful scene, and yet certainly *her* father — ah! she had it; the man was sick and must be bled. But then again, such a blade, and not either her father or Lane were doctors. She now for the first time noticed that the pail contained water, and that, setting towards the door, was a large tub.

The two whispered again, looked towards the bed, then at each other, when Lane made a gesture of readiness with his knife. Minnie's heart ceased to beat, as she saw her father carefully lift the sleeping man's shoulders and draw him over the edge of the bed, and then, after untying his cravat and unbuttoning his shirt collar, bend the head back over the tub, which had been placed under him. He then turned his own head away, and stood as far off as he could. She saw a movement by Lane, a glance of steel, and

Digitized by Google

heard, as her head swam in darkness, a gurgling, choking sound from the bed. With one wild, piercing shriek, she sank upon the floor, insensible.

. . . . . .

The next morning it was rumored that the drover had been murdered in the streets. A score of different stories were flying about, but all fixing upon Walter Brayton as the murderer. As the latter came from his boarding place to his office, he was astonished to find it surrounded by a crowd of nearly one thousand people, all in a high state of excitement, and attracted by some object in the office. So eager were all to catch a view of the point of interest, that he had not been noticed as he had wedged through the crowd, and now stood at his office door. Skillott first saw him.

"There he comes," shouted Jud Lane, as he, too, caught sight of Walter; "let's hang him."

"*Hang him!*" was caught up by the crowd and went fiercely round, while the mass swayed as if one common pulse throbbed throughout. Angry brows were bent darkly upon the bewildered man, and ominous words were whispered by more than one sober citizen. His very appearance was looked upon as a bold piece of acting to give the impression of innocence.

"What — what does this mean?" finally asked Brayton, looking about him with astonishment.

"It means that you are a black-hearted villain and a *murderer; that's* what it means," said Jud Lane,

Digitized by Google

thrusting his clenched fist into Brayton's face. With a quick, strong sweep of his powerful arm, the lattor struck the landlord to the ground.

"Hang him up! Away with him! Hang him up!" was literally howled forth, as the act was witnessed.

"For what? Why this crowd? And why such language to me?" demanded Brayton, as the lion in him began to stir, and he raised himself to his full height.

"You'll find out soon enough," was the reply from several quarters.

At this juncture, Judge Skillott took off his hat, the crowd becoming orderly as they noticed his wish to speak.

"Fellow-citizens, one whom we well know, Mr. Brayton, is charged with a revolting crime. Last night Mr. Nye, the drover, was murdered by some one. The body, with the throat cut from ear to ear, has been found hidden in Mr. Brayton's office, together with the watch and pocket-book of the deceased. Suspicion has fallen strongly upon Mr. Brayton as the one who perpetrated the crime. It is to be hoped by all his friends that he will be able to clear himself of the charge. In the mean time, as friends of good order and law, I feel constrained to urge you all to go into no violent measures, assuring you that the majesty of the law will be vindicated, and the guilty brought to punishment. One unlawful act does not justify another."

Walter, with that keenness of intellect character-

Digitized by Google

istic of himself, at once comprehended the fiend-like cunning of the plot to ruin him, and his lip quivered as the officers came forward and placed the fetters upon his hands, and he passed through the frowning crowd to the jail.

. . . . . .

The time of Doctor Howard's trial at last came round, and found him as unprepared as at first. He had left no effort unmade for the discovery of the whereabouts of the Hermit; but no clue had been found as the result of his inquiries.

Unfortunately for his case, a fresh outrage had been perpetrated in the burial ground of Oakvale, and the popular mind was at once inflamed by an excitement more intense than at first. The grave of Colonel Weston had been robbed on the night following his burial, and under most aggravated circumstances — the coffin being left on the ground and the grave open. A wagon was tracked from the entering gate to Howard's office; but no trace of the body could be found about the premises. So infuriated were the people at this bold perpetration of body robbery, that they tore Howard's office to the ground, and had commenced on his house, when Judge Skillott interfered with a posse of police and put a stop to the riot. Howard felt that this affair sealed his doom, and awaited the day of trial with the calmness of despair.

The trial was brief, for Howard had no testimony to offer against that brought forward by the prosecution, and the case went to the jury after a few remarks

Digitized by Google

by the gentlemanly prosecuting attorney; Howard doggedly preserving sullen silence through the whole trial. The jury, after retiring a short half-hour, returned with a verdict of *guilty*. Howard's face was bloodless, and but for a shriek which broke the oppressive silence in the court-room, not a breath was heard as the verdict was pronounced by the foreman. Howard recognized the voice, which rang like a despairing wail in the hushed room, and the blood rushed like a flame upon his cheek and brow, he biting his lip through with a convulsive start. 'Twas then that he stood up and asked permission to say a few words. The Judge was sure of him, now that the verdict was declared, and very blandly granted the request. Howard remarked in substance:

"Friends — *no* — I will not say that after the treatment I have received in this community — I am aware that my fate is fixed, and I am to be branded as a felon, and incarcerated in prison among felons. But for one whose heart has well-nigh given way under the blow, I should not have opened my mouth on this occasion. Before God and you, my fellow-citizens and neighbors, I am as innocent of this crime which is charged upon me as the most innocent among you. I find myself bound and powerless in the toils of as base a plot as ever ruined an innocent man. My name has been covered with infamy, my wife treated with neglect and scorn, and my property laid waste by an infuriated mob. And, as if to make the blow still more crushing, another crime, still more aggra-

Digitized by Google

vated than the first, has been charged against me, and traced to my door.

"I did not rob Gerald Brayton's grave. I have satisfactory evidence that he was poisoned in one of the taverns of this village. He was hurried to the grave on purpose to conceal the fact of his being poisoned; but becoming alarmed, the *murderers* [fixing his eye boldly upon the Judge] dug up the body. They were *caught in the act*, and frightened from their prey. Myself and another individual saw it all; and after they fled from the body, it was taken to my premises, (where it was found by your committee,) and the stomach taken out and the contents subjected to a chemical analysis. Your committee failed in finding the stomach; and not until the real perpetrators of this double crime are before you on trial, will the proof it furnishes of a violent death be brought to light. There was one who knows more of this matter than I do, and to whom I have looked for a solution of all this difficulty. His absence is unaccountable to me.

"But I will not detain you. I see by your countenances that my words find no lodgment in your minds. So be it. I go to prison; but surely, a just God, who knows my innocence, will yet bring the guilty to punishment. Those who stole the body of Gerald Brayton are now in this court-room, but not under sentence. The main actor, and I believe, one who first poisoned and then planned the robbery of the body, is *now on the bench*, and is to sentence one who is innocent, for the crime *he* committed!"

Digitized by Google

There was intense excitement in the audience as Howard uttered these words, with his eye turned full and steadily upon Judge Skillott. Save a slight pallor around the mouth, the countenance of that personage wore a pitying sneer, plainly saying he forgave the prisoner this malignant attempt to avert odium from himself by making a charge against the bench.

The audience hushed as Skillott slowly arose to sentence the prisoner. The remarks of the Judge were cunningly made up of pity and forgiveness for one who blamed so unjustly. It had been a sad and unpleasant duty to try one of his own friends and neighbors, and it only remained for him to meet the most painful duty of all, in sentencing the prisoner to the state prison for the term of five years and six months.

Mrs. Howard was taken from the court-room to her desolate home, moaning and weeping with delirium, calling plaintively upon her husband's name, and imploring help to save him. There was a quick, impulsive reaction in many a mind, as people looked upon her situation, and in their sympathies for her they forgot the harsh words they had spoken of the Doctor.

As Mrs. Howard could not visit the jail, Howard was taken to his dwelling to see her. It was a scene which, were we able, we could wish to describe. The moaning maniac appeared to recognize the voice, and welcomed him with smiles and tears. She would listen as Howard stooped where she knelt, and between each lingering kiss upon her hot brow whispered "poor Mary."

Digitized by Google

Aye, poor Mary! The husband and wife were gently parted; and he, with a look of agony such as can never be described, stood upon the threshold and looked upon the silent room, wept his choking "God bless you!" upon the sunny locks of his child, and reeled away. There were no rude sounds as the prisoner passed through the streets to the prison, that institution having just been completed in Oakvale. Howard turned at the corner and looked towards his home again.

— The heavy mass of iron crashed back to its place, falling coldly into the heart, and the prisoner was entombed. Then only was it that people remembered the goodness of the ever-frank and manly physician. And as fresh outrages occurred in the burial ground, more than one who had followed Howard so bitterly began to question whether a great wrong had not been done to an innocent man.

. . . . . .

As the talk about the trial and conviction of Howard died away, the approaching trial of Walter Brayton assumed its place in the public mind.

Calm, pale, and with a manly port worthy of Walter in his best days, he sat in the prisoner's box. His flesh had wasted, and his color had faded during his confinement, but his eye was full, and boldly searched the countenances of those around him. The room was densely crowded, for the Attorney-General had been engaged for the prosecution; and as it became known that Walter would defend himself in person,

Digitized by Google

the people counted on a trial of great interest. To the usual question, he firmly answered "Not guilty," and looked every one of the jurors steadily in the eye as they came before him.

The trial proceeded. The proof was all circumstantial, yet bearing hard against the prisoner. Jud Lane swore directly to having seen Brayton with Nye late in the evening of the murder, in the vicinity of Brayton's office. Brayton subjected the fellow to a searching cross-examination; but his story was brief and doggedly repeated every time. It was shown in proof that the body of the drover was found concealed in the prisoner's office, with the throat cut, and a wallet known to be the drover's in his (Brayton's) overcoat pocket. There were marks of a scuffle, and of blood upon the floor. Another witness testified that he had heard the deceased asking legal advice of the prisoner, about certain difficulties with a farmer of whom he had purchased cattle. The pocket-book of the deceased too, was found in the office.

Brayton offered but one witness — Halton — who testified that the prisoner was with him from before dark until two o'clock in the morning, engaged on business of the Division, and when that was finished, he retired to bed as usual, the prisoner boarding at his house.

The arguments were brief, though unusually eloquent and able. Walter's defence was worthy of his fame as an advocate and an orator. He commented upon the evidence, accounting for the circumstances

Digitized by Google

upon no other ground than as a worse than devilish conspiracy to blacken the name and take the life of an innocent man.

"As God is my judge, gentlemen, I am as ignorant as yourselves of the manner in which the body of the deceased came in my office. It is true I was retained by Mr. Nye as counsel in a suit, but farther than that, I never passed a word with him. I was not in his company on the night of his death, nor in the neighborhood of my office. It does not look reasonable that I should commit so horrible a crime in my own office, and leave the records to be found against me.

"But I will not detain you, gentlemen, though life is sweet, and an innocent man might be indulged in addressing those in whose hands his fate is placed. I have been guilty of much; but there is no stain of blood upon this hand. It would be sweet to live and redeem the errors of the past, but there are few to regret me. I have no kindred on earth, and should you condemn me, gentlemen, I can meet God with a conscience clear of this crime charged against me. Whatever your verdict may be, I know not; but if against me, I shall meet my fate with a lighter heart than will those who have conspired to rob me of the only boon left me of a bitter wreck. In behalf of such as may believe me unjustly charged, I again, before this immense audience and my God, most solemnly affirm my innocence of the crime for which I am on trial. An ignominious death may be mine, for it were vain

Digitized by Google

to deny that the evidence is strongly against me; but the right will ultimately triumph, and the dread stigma be removed from the name of Walter Brayton."

The next morning, after the cause went to the jury, the prisoner was brought into court and the verdict declared. It is ever painful to await the voice of a foreman when the life of a fellow-being hangs upon his words. The stillness which falls upon the multitude is painful.

"*Guilty*, but recommended to mercy," was the slow answer of the foreman. There was a low rush of voices, and again the stillness. To the usual interrogatory, Brayton replied that he had nothing to say. When called upon by the Judge, he stood up almost proudly, and listened to the sentence. Skillott affected great feeling in pronouncing the sentence, but shunned the calm and piercing eye of the prisoner. Walter was sentenced to be hung by the neck until he was dead.

The bearing of the prisoner had been so noble — so modest, yet bold and manly — that many who believed him guilty, could not but admire the man, and pity his fate. The people dispersed and went thoughtfully to their homes.

Not until in his cell and alone, did Walter begin to realize the result of his trial. 'Twas there that the bright dreams he had woven since his reform came back to mock him. He did not give way to grief, but his spirit chafed against his prison bars, and strove to grapple with the unseen hand which had wrought

Digitized by Google

such wrong. He was bound in the dark, and now lay helpless, sentenced to an ignominious death, and without friends to save him from the fate. Gaston, the jailer, was kind, and Halton and his companions deserted him not; but those with whom he had associated in party conflicts left him alone. Elder Snyder called upon him once, and coldly talked to him as to a guilty murderer, and urged him to confess his crime as the only atonement he could make. Walter indignantly repelled his advice, and gave him to understand that he should not damn his soul with a lie. The elder drew a long sigh, and then turned haughtily away.

About this time an itinerating Methodist revivalist came to Oakvale and commenced a series of meetings, which rapidly kindled a high state of religious feeling throughout the community. Crowds flocked to hear the new comer — the rich and the abandoned weeping over the deep and melting pathos of his appeals. His style was not the denunciatory, save when assailing wrong; but to men, he plead as a brother would plead. He visited the sick and comforted the afflicted, wept with those who wept, was mild and winning to the young, and for the erring he ever had a kind and forgiving word. His manner was humble and subdued, though at times he would rouse like a storm, his eyes flashing like the lightning under his cloudy brow. His appearance and manner were patriarchal; his white locks and beard flowing uncut, his neat but plain apparel, his eye of mingled sadness

Digitized by Google

and smiles, his voice of singular sweetness and power, and his easy gestures, combined to render the man irresistible as a preacher. His sermons were not all made up of the terrible imagery of infernal torment; but of love and hope, and eternal bliss in a better land — of a Saviour weeping over Jerusalem, and over the grave of Lazarus — of his meekness and deeds of mercy to the poor, the needy and the afflicted, — of his struggles in the garden — of his bloody death and prayer of forgiveness for his enemies — all these features in the Redeemer's character, were presented in a spirit which found a lodgment in the stoniest heart. His prayers burned with the same inspired eloquence, and as he bowed his venerable form to the floor, and lifted it again, with his cheeks wet with tears, it seemed as if his great heart throbbed under the very throne of his Master in Heaven. None knew the man, or whence he came.

The revivalist had not been in Oakvale a day before he learned the history of the last few years, and it was whispered that he had been seen wandering in the old church-yard on the clear moonlight evenings. On the night of his arrival he visited the jail where Brayton was confined, and was promptly admitted to see the prisoner.

The sun had set, but the crimson glow in the west was reflected in the cell where Walter sat, watching through the high-grated window the receding daylight. The prisoner turned as the door creaked on its hinges, and the revivalist stood before him.

Digitized by Google

"Have I the happiness of seeing Walter Brayton?" he asked, in a tone of great sweetness.

"Who is it that is happy to see that individual in a dungeon and in chains, may I ask?" said Walter, with bitterness.

"A friend. Glad to see *him*, but not to find him thus," replied the revivalist with sadness, as he advanced and took the prisoner's hand firmly in his own. There was a magnetism in the grasp and in the watery eye which met his own, and the prisoner felt that the stranger was a friend.

"I am a poor, humble Methodist preacher, just in the place, and hastened to visit those in prison. I hope I am not unwelcome?"

Walter did not resist the influence of the man's tone and manner, for he felt drawn towards him, and conversed with him as he never had conversed with but one before. Ere he was aware, he had fully and frankly rehearsed the history of the last few years—his attachment to Minnie Hermon and their rupture; his trial and the result.

"And you are innocent?"

"As the angels in Heaven, of the crime for which I am condemned."

"I believe you; and if I can do anything to unravel this dark plot, rest assured it shall be done. But of one thing let me assure you: you wrong Minnie Hermon. I have had occasion to know something of that woman, and a truer, nobler creature never honored

Digitized by Google

her sex. You will find plotting there, as well as in other matters."

A new light broke upon Walter's mind, and his spirit was lighter for a long time after the revivalist had left the prisoner.

An hour passed away, and the cell door again swung back upon its hinges, the lamp in the jailer's hand revealing a female figure deeply muffled. There was a hesitancy in her movements, but as Gaston put the lamp upon the rude table, she advanced to where the prisoner yet sat, and stood before him. He noticed that she trembled, her features yet carefully concealed from him. Slowly turning towards the door, as if to satisfy herself that the jailer had departed, she lifted the hood and vail from her head and face, and dropped on her knees before the prisoner.

"Minnie Hermon!"

"Walter Brayton!"

. . . . . .

"And you do not believe me guilty of this dark crime, Minnie, and forgive me that I have so deeply injured you?"

"I *know* you are not guilty. If you were, I could forgive you a thousand times!"

"But may I ask why that emphasis on the word 'know'?"

"Oh, God! how horrible!—and the *oath*—the *oath!*" and she shuddered, and covered her face.

Digitized by Google

"What do you mean — what oath? I cannot understand you."

"Do you believe," she asked, looking wildly around and not heeding his questions, "that we are bound to keep an oath when extorted by — by violence — by a knife at the ——"

"Mr. Lane wishes to ask Mr. Brayton one question," said the jailer, as he came to the cell door. Minnie sprang to her feet as if the voice had been an adder's hiss, and rushed to the door, beseeching Gaston in frantic whispers to let her go.

"That Lane *must* not see me here, or he is lost!" exclaimed she.

Lane made some trivial inquiry and immediately left. It was long before Walter found rest, so swiftly did new and strange thoughts rush across his mind.

— That *oath!* What could that mean?

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A STAR IN THE EAST — THE PLAGUE STAYED.

"Lost! forever lost!" sighed a man in tattered garments, and his face bloated with rum, as he pulled his broken hat over his eyes and turned sadly away, and passed down the steps of the Capitol.

"God forgive them! but there is no hope for the widow now!" ejaculated an emaciated woman in tattered garb, as with quivering lip she drew her threadbare blanket closely around her shoulders, and disappeared in the crowd. Her only child was in jail for drunkenness, while she had crept in to witness the scene below. The last hope had been crushed out from her heart, as she heard, clear and distinct in the stillness, "The bill is lost!"

"My children at home! We must starve and freeze before summer comes again," whispered a wife and mother in accents of despair, as she stood gazing from the gallery, her thin arms folded, and a heavy eye, watery with tears she could not keep back. A pale, delicate-looking girl, with sharp, pinched features, dress torn at the bottom, and her legs bare and red from the cold, stood clinging to the mother's dress and watching the scene with a vacant stare.

Digitized by Google

The crowd were pouring out of the chamber as the wretched looking creature aroused from her reverie, and dragged the child away by the hand. None knew how dark was the shadow which that hour gloomed in the pauper's heart, and hung over the hearth of her cellar home. How could she wrestle longer with the plague which had scourged her?

"And father must die a drunkard, Mary," said a boy of twelve years, he and his sister turning and going out arm in arm. The two were motherless; and since she had taken their hands in her cold palm and commended them to God, they had not known a kind word at home. They had heard that drunkenness was to be stopped that day, and had mingled with the throng and found a place in the Capitol. God pity the legislator who that day said "Yes," to the business which has robbed the innocents of their mother and plunged them into beggary.

"O that it had passed," came in an almost inaudible whisper, from a beautiful young female, her fair form buried in costly furs, and a ring of great brilliancy glancing upon her slender finger. Her cheek was fair, but there was a canker at the core, and there were stains from the heavy lid where bitter drops had stood. She was a child of wealth and fashion, and a bride; but she had found a dark stream gliding beneath the idol of her heart. The belle and heiress went forth with a heart as sad as the saddest, for she too had entered the Capitol to see the plague stayed.

"Would that my boy were dead, for I cannot save

Digitized by Google

him now!" said a wealthy and distinguished citizen with tremulous voice and compressed lip, looking down upon those to whom he had looked for help, and nervously fingering his gold-headed cane. He spoke of an only son who had plunged deeply into dissipation, and but for his family connection, would have been sent to prison for forgery. The old man had wealth, but dared not look into the future, for he feared the worst to his reckless and drunken boy.

"Traitors — cursed traitors!" muttered a rumseller, glaring upon those who had belied their profession as Christians, and their duties as parents and citizens. The man's heart had not been all calloused in a bad business. His better nature revolted at the traffic, and he had eagerly hoped that the whole system would have been swept from the land.

"Well, Mayor, this is glorious, ain't it? We're good for another year, G——d d——n 'em! Let's go over to Congress Hall and take something," exultingly exclaimed a dealer, as he slapped an old distiller familiarly on the shoulder, and then linking their arms together, they passed out and turned to the left.

"Well," said one of a knot of men standing back of the desks, "we are beaten here, but we will carry it up to the tribunal of the people. Many of these men who have been thus recreant to humanity and right, will come not again to the Capitol. Hereafter we will send up our petitions through the ballot box."

"Aye, aye, that we will," was the response from

Digitized by Google

stern men, as groups lingered about and discussed the great measure which had been watched with so much interest by the people of a great State.

As the news spread from the Capitol, there went sadness to thousands of hearts. Three hundred thousand men, women and children, had petitioned against the plague, but to see their appeal answered with deliberate insult. The popular storm had swept around the Capitol. The heart of the commonwealth had beat up against its pillars. Humanity, crushed and bleeding, had dragged her form to the porch, and plead with the eloquence of ten thousand bruised and bleeding sufferers, but to be pierced anew by legislative Iscariots, amid the jeers and laughter of the emissaries of an accursed traffic.

After all other measures had failed, a new one had been brought out by the hand of a good Providence. A star had arisen in the east. A sovereign State had flung out a new banner, and given a new battle-cry to the retrograding hosts of the reform. At one stroke the traffic had been annihilated in that State. The news flashed through the Union, and everywhere kindled enthusiasm and hope. The heart of a Christian people throbbed responsive to the shout from Maine, and to the peal of one common war-cry, rallied in solid phalanx. "Pass this law," said a drunkard in Oakvale, "and I may be saved. Now I cannot come to mill or to church without getting drunk. Give us this law, and I can die a sober man, and, I hope, go to Heaven. Without it I am lost." And so thou-

Digitized by Google

sands of drunkards turned their eyes to the new light in the east, as to a brazen serpent which should heal them. Nothing else could. Even the eloquent Gault had been tempted and crushed for a time, while thousands of stars of lesser ray had set in impenetrable gloom, unnoticed. The measure had been tried in New-York, and had failed; and the storm was already gathering in blackness, to burst again, and sweep down upon the Capitol.

Firm for God and the right, the people went to the ballot boxes throughout the land, and put up their petitions. The issue was there tried, and the right triumphed! Men worked for their families, country and the right, instead of party, and voted for legislators whom they could petition for a prohibitory law without a blush. The recreancy of the former legislature had vibrated to every part of the State, and had been answered by a stern and unmistakable response.

. . . . . .

Dense masses were darkening the streets in the vicinity of the Capitol, and their heavy tread was music in the ears of the despairing. There was a moral sublimity in this gathering of the people as they came from their homes and business avocations to witness the result of their November strife. The white-haired sire mingled with the vigorous middle-aged, and the enthusiastic youth. Women and neatly-dressed children were wending their way up the hill. Banners were waving, the music swelled up from the bands, and a voice like the low murmur of many waters

Digitized by Google

came up from the masses. A long procession, made up of citizen soldiers in the great moral conflict, and deserters from all political parties, beat the ground to the music of the bands. One vast, throbbing mass — a living tide of American citizens and freemen, calmly but sternly, and with steady steps, filed around the corners, and swept in unbroken column through the streets, and emerged into State street and rolled up towards the capitol buildings, one common purpose throbbing to the music from end to end. At the Capitol the wave swept to the left, swaying onward and onward until the vast architectural pile was hedged with steady ranks, and the head of the column dashed against its kindred wave, and then rolled grandly up the Capitol steps.

The scene within the Capitol was one for a lifetime. There was grandeur there; for the choice spirits of a great State had gathered to witness the deliberations of their servants, and to present their petitions in person. A vast and unbroken sea of heads appeared everywhere, and without came up the murmur of the voices of those who could find no entrance. Wealth and fashion had already secured a position, and thickly sprinkled throughout the mass were the sad-looking and the poorly clad — mothers, wives and children, who had again assembled to see whether they were to be shielded from their woes. The legislators looked thoughtfully upon the array, save now and then a red-faced, brawling demagogue, who tried his pot-house

Digitized by Google

wit or coarse slang upon the people, who minded not his bloated and insolent features.

Permission had been granted several of the champions of the reform to occupy the floor of the chamber in advocacy of a prohibitory measure. John Gault, once a gutter drunkard, slowly lifted his slender form, and in low, but distinct and silvery tones, addressed the representatives of the people. What a trophy had been wrenched from the destroyer when that man was saved! With tones of wondrous magic and depth, his words rolled out and reached every heart in that immense audience. He kindled as he progressed, his words glowing and burning with the true eloquence of nature. Then was witnessed the power of one of nature's orators. He swayed the audience at will. They smiled, or wept, or frowned in stern indignation. His scenes passed before them like fearful realities, and many a cheek paled as he described the effects of intemperance upon the drunkard and his home. Shudders at times crept over the strongest frames, and eyes unused to weeping flooded at a touch of his pathos. He plead for the drunkards of the land with all the heart-fervor of one who had felt the scourge. Anon he poured down the most withering invective upon the traffic, towering and swaying as the storm howled and the lightning leaped from his quivering finger, and the large drops standing out upon his brow. Such was John Gault, and as he closed with an appeal which has never been sur-

Digitized by Google

passed, each auditor feared to stir, so deep had been the spell of the master.

And there was Halton, too — the grey-headed, true and iron-hearted reformer. His warm and rugged eloquence, though less brilliant than that of his brother reformer, had that sledge-hammer earnestness and strength which told deeply for the right.

A senator then came forward and addressed the people. In that tall, noble-appearing man, we recognized our friend from the southern tier, introduced to the reader in the commencement of our history, Mr. Fenton. We awaited eagerly his words, for he was the champion of the prohibitionists in the Senate.

He was a strong man, and full of fire. His blows crushed like bolts, as with resistless logic and rare eloquence he hailed them upon the traffic. His full, dark eye kindled, while now and then he drew himself up to his full height, and with his thin lip curling with scorn, he swooped down upon the positions of the opposition.

"But we are told," said he, "that this measure is not demanded by the people — that it will ruin the temporance cause by reaction. How long since rum-sellers, distillers, rum-treating demagogues and legislators of easy virtue, who were elected by the rum interest, have been the exclusive friends of temperance? From the earliest period of our reform, as I very well know, these classes have found fault with all the measures adopted for the extinction of intemperance, and bitterly opposed them. And yet they

Digitized by Google

now presume to dictate what course shall be pursued! This measure is needed. The people demand it. It is in vain to hope to remove the evil by regulation. The present law is an admission of the right to legislate, and the power which brought this wrong into legal being, has a right to remove it. The history of the reform shows that it is in vain to roll back the evil while it has its fountain in the legislature. Drunkards are reformed and restored to their families but to be tempted and at last destroyed. We chain them down to the rock of appetite, and then let loose a swarm of vultures to pluck their vitals. You may as well expect to legalize the circulation of the plague and expect no one to die with it, as to legalize the rum-traffic and expect none to become drunkards. No moral barrier can save the inebriate, his family and home from the consequences of a wrong which is set in operation by law.

"But this is a moral question. So it is, and a legitimate question for legislation. It concerns the dearest interests of society — the happiness, good order, morality and prosperity of a great people. Moral questions of far inferior moment have been legislated upon, and none have complained. Many of the evils that are suppressed by strong penal enactments, in three-fourths of the cases, spring directly from the rum-traffic. The existing law is an answer to this objection. The traffic stands branded as an evil — one of such magnitude that laws have been enacted to guard society from its full influence.

Digitized by Google

"We hear much of liberty and natural rights. The worst outlaws in society would joy, sir, to hear the doctrines advanced on this floor. I am yet to learn that liberty is unbridled license, or natural rights a code for civilized and Christian people, as here proclaimed. Governments are formed by a surrender of certain natural rights, and the weak are protected in that compact as well as the strong. The strongest arm does not then rule, nor the pistol and knife remain the umpires between man and man. Rumsellers are not the only members of that compact, and they would not dare to have society plunged into chaos, and each member run his chance. Were this so, God knows that the wrongs of many a heart and home would have been most signally avenged. Dissolve society, and woe betide the rumsellers. A man may dig a pit, but not to entrap a neighbor. He may let an unruly ox run, if there are none to injure. He may build his mill-dam, slaughter-house or soap-factory, if they do not injure the public. He may keep powder, if lives are not endangered; or publish obscene books, if there are none to read them; or breed rattlesnakes and mad-dogs, if there are none to be bitten; he may do all this by natural right, but the moment he becomes a member of the social compact, his course would injure others; and one man's interests are never to be pushed to the destruction of those of his neighbors. If he goes into society, he is bound to regard the welfare and rights of the whole; if he will not, let him assume the posi-

Digitized by Google

tion of an outlaw, and depend upon the exercise of his natural rights for the protection of himself and property. Why, sir, this law is no new thing. It is as old as the creation of man. Its principles are laid in the sublime fabric of Divine government. They were graven upon the tables of stone—they shine forth in revelation — they throb in the great heart of our common humanity — they are recognized and built upon in every civilized government in the world. Hunt through the statutes of christendom to-day, and you will find the principles of the Maine Law in all its length and breadth, and height and depth. It is the great principle of the general welfare — the law of God, of love, justice and truth, everywhere brought out in Divine government. Private interest must always give way to the common good. The pit must be filled up or guarded; the unruly ox must be killed or pounded; his mill-dam must be drained; his slaughter-house and soap-factory pulled down, his powder and obscene books destroyed, his dogs and snakes muzzled or killed. In fine, sir, that is a most damnable, anti-republican principle which demands that the good of a whole community shall be sacrificed that individuals may have unbridled license in their selfishness, and prosper in wickedness. It is a principle which would scatter plague, and cover the earth with rotting dead, that doctors, sextons and undertakers might grow rich. It is a principle which has filled our homes with desolation, ruined the living, and damned the dead.

Digitized by Google

"But we are told that we cannot legislate men into morality — can coax, but not coerce. Ever since God's will has been revealed to man, penal laws have existed. One would suppose, to hear the opposition declaim, that this earth had suddenly become a Paradise, and its inhabitants angels. They do not stop to tell us that all men are not susceptible of moral influences — that but for penal laws, men would yet steal their fellows, rob the traveler, plunder graves, burn and butcher. With all our safeguards, educated by intemperance and its kindred vices, crimes of every dye continue to blacken our criminal records. Every penal enactment is a coercive measure. The mind revolts from their repeal, or the regulation of these crimes—farming out for silver, the right to a few of plundering property and destroying life. We coerce every enemy of society. If caught violating any of its ordinances, he is punished. The provisions of this bill, Sir, are no more arbitrary than our present statutes. The rights of the citizen, the sanctity of his property, liberty, or dwelling, are not more jeopardized than now. If stolen goods are believed to be secreted in a dwelling, it is searched from cellar to garret, and no complaint made. The counterfeiters' or gamblers' den is searched, their tools destroyed, and they punished. The one but gambles for money with an equal chance; the dealer gambles for the money of his victim, with appetite to aid him in the play. The counterfeiter turns out a bogus dollar; the dealer counterfeits the image of God, and adulte-

Digitized by Google

rates immortal coin. Is a spurious half-dollar more dangerous to society than an imbruted and beggared citizen? And yet you imprison the one who corrupts your coin, and give the other the right to corrupt and blight every pure current in the hearts of your people. The dealer would resort to the coercion of legal process, were a five-dollar counterfeit bill to be put off upon him, and yet he claims the *natural liberty* of so marring the moral beauty of his own kind, and of blighting their manhood that a demon stands in the place of a kind and high-minded citizen! Who has ever complained of the exercise of law for the protection of the health of community? Are not many kinds of food interdicted, the diseased citizen forcibly seized and thrust into the pest-house, the vessel compelled to lie in quarantine, or its cargo destroyed and even the vessel itself sunk, if the public health demands the measure? Does not our government, in time of war, quarter troops in our dwellings, appropriate stores and teams, and compel the citizen to assist? Such measures are arbitrary; but when the public interest demands them, the patriot will not complain.

"Again. We are told that the law cannot be enforced without bloodshed and violence — the present law is sufficient. I believe, Sir, the American people are preëminently law-abiding. They are familiar with the democratic doctrine of the majority. Whenever public sentiment assumes power to force from reluctant legislators a law for the protection of the

Digitized by Google

people from a terrible evil, is it not believed that they will see that it is enforced? The law has been enforced. It is no longer an experiment. It has been tried, and its success has become a matter of history. Without violence or bloodshed, the people of a neighboring State crushed the evil at a blow! And were a thousand lives to be sacrificed in carrying into effect a law like this, their blood would be but the drop in the ocean, when compared with that which has for ages smoked upon Christian altars. The cry of murder comes on every wind; crime stalks upon the heels of crime at midday; from its Aceldemas red-handed butchery runs with its smoking blade to the commission of fresh atrocities, until our criminal records are crimson with hot gore, and the scaffold casts its shadow in every part of the land. Our dungeons swarm with murderers, and thence the slayer's feet are continually beating their way to the gibbet, until the details of murder and execution are as familiar to our people as the newspapers which come to their dwellings. And those who manufacture all these butchers are going to resist, to the knife, the enactment which shuts up these schools of crime! As to the present law, it is the merest humbug that ever outraged a Christian people. It is a stupendous farce, as also an infamous wrong. It is a compromise between good and evil — with iniquity — a yoking of saint and devil — a compound of heaven and hell — an infernal adulteration which lifts up and legalizes wrong, and pulls down the right — a draping of the three-

Digitized by Google

mouthed dog of the pit in the habiliments of a guardian angel, to stand and smile at the door-sills of the pits on earth. The principle would associate the arch-fiend with Deity on the throne of Heaven, and mingle the wails of the lost with the praises of the redeemed. It would unite the worlds of bliss and of woe, and place angels on a footing with devils. Sir, does God, in his government, recognize such a principle? Do his laws regulate theft, swearing, perjury, murder, &c.? Do his retributions slumber when so-called respectable men trample upon his laws? Do his penalties fall without modification upon the most abandoned, while sinners of "good moral" character enter in and dwell at his right hand? Does he strike hands with iniquity? Can those who have wealth, and power, and respectability, transgress his commandments, and go unpunished? Where, in any civilized government now existing on earth, is this principle made the basis of legislation, save in the legalization of the rum traffic? Supposing, Sir, that the legislature should legalize the crimes which are now punishable with imprisonment and death for the purpose of restraining them? That they should empower a selection of good moral men to perpetrate those crimes, so as to have the perpetration legal, moral, and respectable? That men should be selected to rob, to steal, to gamble, to counterfeit, to commit forgery, to burn buildings, to murder? The most common intelligence would revolt at the damning wickedness, and treat such legislators as madmen or knaves. The

Digitized by Google

popular breath would at once sweep them into lasting infamy. Yet the license system is a creature of legal enactment, and stands before the world this day as the *great fountain-head of nearly all the crimes which endanger the peace and blacken the character of society.* Men are selected to engage in this traffic, and the government sells the accursed 'indulgence.' If but a good moral character is endorsed by the excise commissioners, the seller becomes a state officer — a legal instrument — a servant of the people, empowered to nerve the villain's arm which carries the torch or lifts the knife, to burn or to destroy. He scatters firebrands and death throughout the land, blights hopes as bright as bliss, destroys happiness the holiest and purest, and sweeps on like an avenging storm, until all that is pure in childhood, noble in manhood, or venerable in old age, is withered and crushed to earth. Life, happiness, and hope; virtue, love and truth, are alike blasted by these men, selected by the State, and protected by its laws. And all this to restrain and regulate the traffic! The policy is wrong in motive, impolitic in principle, atrocious in its execution, and most cruel in its consequences. It is a principle so damnable in its conception and character, and so sweeping and remorseless in its destruction of human happiness and life, that it may well crimson the cheek of an American freeman with deepest shame. Regulation and restraint!

"Sir, in the days when indulgences were sold, when every kind of vice was licensed and *regulated*,

Digitized by Google

this abomination would not have been out of place, though more thoroughly infamous than any of its kindred iniquities. Mark these inconsistencies — the inefficiency of the law in securing the object designed, and its demoralizing influence upon public sentiment, and its *legal* waste of happiness and life — and blush that so foul a stain has a resting-place upon the statute books of our people. We go upon the principle of choosing a good man to engage in a devilish business. We give respectability to a business denounced by God; a business which crushes the rights of humanity and destroys the sanctity of religion, its every footstep smoking with the hot blood of the hearts it has crushed. Our commissioners would appear as honorable, and far more humane, if they were to select men of good moral character to steal, burn, and kill, and do society far less injury.

"There *is* a regulation, in the matter of selling to drunkards. Indeed, the license law is professedly to restrain intemperance. Need I point you to the results? Whence come this vast army of drunkards, who throng every avenue of life, and with ceaseless tread move on to the grave? Where are the fountains which feed this stream of wrecked humanity? Where is the cause? Day and night, from year to year, the unbroken columns move on. The grave swallows forty thousand in twelve months. The sod has hardly closed upon a fearful sacrifice, before its cold arms are thrown up to embrace as many more. And so this host moves on. Recruits are ever enlist-

Digitized by Google

ing. The youth in the saloon takes the drunkard's place. And so back until the legions are wrapt in the sunlight of youth, the diorama of life is moving. And so it has moved for ages — that measured and gloomy tramp taking hold upon dishonored death. Rumsellers never wish men to die drunkards, and, under a wise law, never *sell* to drunkards. And so we 'regulate' whole armies of human beings into premature graves every year that rolls around. When — when, Sir, will intemperance be so regulated by our present system that our green land shall not become one vast burial-ground for drunkards?

"We are told that the sale is justifiable, because the license money goes into the treasury! This policy furnishes us with another strong reason why the whole system should be removed. It is one of the strongest arguments against legalizing the traffic. The principle involved is one of unadulterated wickedness. Government thus assumes the attitude of a speculator in the lives and happiness of its subjects. With one arm it thrusts its victims upon the begrimmed altars, and with the other grasps eagerly for the price of the sacrifice. Here it stands upon its pedestal of the heart-broken, the dying, and the dead, a remorseless Moloch enthroned, and smiling upon the enginery of death which, for gain, it has set in motion. There is something hideous, something revolting in the aspect. Like an unnatural parent, it destroys its own for a price. Those whom it should guard and protect are thrust beneath the ponderous wheels which roll in

Digitized by Google

ruin. Men, women, and children; youth in the buoyancy of its hopes, and old age in its locks of gray, are alike offered up. Society thus immolates all its most cherished interests for pay, and secures to itself the glorious privilege of bearing ten-fold burdens, building poor-houses and prisons, and digging graves. It sells the lives of its own citizens. Christian men sit down deliberately and say to those who wish to sell rum, in so many words, 'How many pieces of silver will you give us if we will betray these women and children into your hands?' All this is cool and deliberately cruel. Life and all its bright hopes are thus bartered away, while an oath sits heavy on the soul. Do not your cheeks tinge with shame as you take in the length and breadth of this policy? Even in a pecuniary point of view it is ruinous. For every dollar thus received, hundreds are paid out. It is a fearful and perpetual drain upon the substance of the people. Evils are sown broadcast, and we reap a burdening harvest of woe, want, crime and death. All that we cherish in this world and hope for in the next, is put in the scale with dollars and cents. For five or ten dollars, a man is delegated to scatter a moral plague throughout the land, and fatten upon the substance of the people. Let our commissioners look at the silver they have received. It is the tribute of blood. It has been wrung from the crushed hearts of the ruined, and is clammy with drops of blood. It is hot with the scalding tears of widowhood and orphanage. As it falls into the public coffers, its dull

Digitized by Google

sound echoes the wail of the famished and defenseless. Ho! for the price of blood! Hoard it well; for an ever-living and watchful God has put its cost on record. Over against it, to be tested at the tribunal of the Judgment, stands the record of the unutterable evils of the rum-traffic. And as witnesses against it, will stand the myriads whom the policy destroyed on earth.

"You talk of property — this evil wars upon all property. It paralyzes industry, thus working deep and irreparable injury to individual and national prosperity. Its cost to the American people is hardly to be comprehended in all its extent. The direct cost is enough to arouse the patriot against it; indirectly, its corroding effects leave their blighting mildew wherever it exists. Our poor-expenses tower until the people groan under their weight. The hard earnings of the tax-payers of the country are annually assessed to meet the cost of the sale of rum. The family is beggared, and the people support them. The drunkard ruins his health, breaks a limb, or sustains some injury from his drinking habits, and becomes a public charge. A citizen wastes his substance in the dram-shop, and from one gradation of vice to another, at last becomes a criminal. If he counterfeits, commits forgery or burglary, the people try him and foot the bills. If, inflamed by the people's rum, he thrusts the torch into the city at night, thousands are licked up by the flames; and if the incendiary is caught, he is imprisoned or hung, and the forbearing

Digitized by Google

people foot the bills. If, in a drunken broil, he takes the life of a fellow-being, the people try him, hang him, and foot the bill. Thus circles round the great maelstrom. From the bar-room to the alms-house, prison and scaffold, a great highway has been cast up, beaten hard by continually thronging thousands. Every day's history records a fresh crime. Our prisons are thronged. The executioner is busy hanging up the effects of the traffic. The blood-offering of one murder ceases not to smoke upon the glutted shrine, before another victim is prepared from the bar-room. The press teems with the sickening details. The great fountain-head of crime sweeps on with increasing volume, and red-handed murder stalks forth even at noonday, with the axe and the knife hot with gore. Lesser crimes swarm like locusts, all combining and swelling an amount of tax which is drawn from the life-blood of the people. The rum-traffic costs the American people more than three hundred millions of dollars. And this is the pecuniary aspect, merely. This annual drain would bind our land in one unbroken net-work of railroads, telegraphs and canals; dot every hill-side with school-houses and churches; erect charitable institutions wherever afflicted humanity groans under misfortune, and make the blessings of education as free as the air we breathe. Patriotism — that love of country, its institutions, and people, which beats warmly and truly in the heart — should awaken our strongest opposition to a cancer which eats so fatally upon the business interests of the land

Digitized by Google

we live in. We might enlarge upon this point, but it needs it not. Trace back the history of any community, and you will be astonished at the amount of its waste. Sift your tax-lists, and it will be found that the cost of the rum-traffic is one of the most grinding burdens borne by the American people. What a position for a nation of freemen! Sacrificing the property and health of its citizens for the pastime of supporting them as paupers! Our people are liberal to a few. They foster vice and a crime, that a few may reap a pecuniary harvest. They make paupers, and build alms-houses to keep them at the public expense. They manufacture criminals of every grade, and then furnish officers to catch them, try them, and punish them. They build prisons, and annually make large appropriations to sustain them — reservoirs where they sweep in the criminals they have made, branding their own offspring with infamy, and compelling them to toil for naught. They instigate murder, and are at the expense of building a scaffold to hang the guilty instruments of their creation. In fine, they educate an army of children for all that is wicked, and then punish them for putting their teaching into practice. Were we a rumseller, we should look with a smile of contempt upon such people. They would give us the privilege of coining money out of the destruction of man's temporal and eternal interests, and then kindly support all the paupers, and hang all the murderers we might make. Such a policy in an individual would be madness. And so it is madness in

Digitized by Google

a great people. It is a heathenish offering up of their own vitals to the rending talons of the monster which is enthroned in every dram-shop throughout the land. Sir, we honor that high-toned, unbending love of liberty and justice which characterized the conduct of our revolutionary fathers. They put every thing at stake, rather than bear the burdens of unjust taxation. War became to them one of the most imperious of human obligations, and the battle-field 'the sublimest theatre of patriotic achievement and heroic martyrdom.' They left their plows in the furrows, and their homes to the protection of Heaven, and grappled boldly with England's strength. That same spirit would to-day make every true patriot's heart beat high with indignation, and arouse a storm which would forever destroy one of the most grinding oppressions on earth. The spirit which hurled the tea into Boston harbor, would seize and destroy every barrel of rum designed for the injury of society.

"The gentlemen on the other side have spoken eloquently about the vast amount of property invested in the traffic. It is an unworthy argument. Were the wealth of the universe of God staked in the traffic, it should not weigh one moment. There are immortal interests staked in human hearts. Mind and happiness — virtue, purity and peace, are worth more than all the wealth of the material universe. The weal of men here and hereafter, cannot be put into the scale with dollars and cents. The crushed and ruined — the mother, wife or child, who has been

Digitized by Google

scourged and robbed, would turn with withering scorn from the cold and heartless computation of her wrongs, in money. The structures of earth pass away, but the property of the mind is indestructible, and lifts up proudly amid the 'wreck of matter,' and exists while God exists! There is something sad in wandering among the ruins of empires where nations lie entombed. More sad the scene of a mind in ruins.

"We weep from a heavy heart as we see the gloom of a rayless night gathering over the mind, and the structure which was moulded by the hand of God crumbling into ruins. The mind is property — property which is of more value than all the wealth of the material universe. And here is where we find one of the most startling effects of intemperance. Here is where the system wars upon a class of property which cannot be computed by dollars and cents. Here are ruins, thickly strewn up and down the land, over which the patriot, philanthropist and Christian can weep with keenest sorrow.

"Sir, had I a constellation of worlds like this, I would resign it all, if every star were a diamond of priceless worth, if the slight sacrifice would buy the loved and the lost from death and the grave.

"Sir, our wives and children demand this measure. Humanity pleads this day. You protect the dead in their graves, the trees in our parks, the animals in our yards, the deer in our forests, and the fish in our waters; and why not, by all that is brave, manly and good, protect our homes, our wives and children?

Digitized by Google

Tell me, Sir, why not? Look at the course of this evil which we ask you, in behalf of suffering humanity, to prohibit.

"It spares neither age nor sex. Its trophies are more to be dreaded than those at the red man's belt, snatched from the throbbing brow of innocence. The system is cruel, mercilessly cruel. It wars upon the defenceless—upon women and children. Its most desolating strife is at the fireside. We execrate it for its cowardice, as well as its injustice and cruelty. Those who are never seen abroad, and who never lifted a hand or a voice against the seller, are crushed down with remorseless coolness. If men alone were destroyed, without wringing the hearts that are linked with them, it would not seem so damnable. But why should a Christian government and a Christian people war upon the happiness of the defenseless inmates of the household? Why should woe and want be carried into our homes? Why should our mothers, and wives, and daughters be scourged until they weep drops of blood? Why should children be turned out with no inheritance but orphanage and disgrace? Why should the props and pride of old hearts be snatched away and broken? Why — in God's name tell us! in this land of plenty, where our barns gush with fatness, where our fields groan under the harvests which roll like golden oceans to the kiss of the sunbeams, and where an ever-kind Providence has scattered his blessings on every hand, should women and children go hungry for bread? Why should our

Digitized by Google

sons be turned out to be drawn into the whirlpool of crime, and our daughters to forget all that's womanly, and sink in vice for their daily bread? Is this Christianlike? Is it like freemen? Why should our homes be transformed into hells, and the husband and father into a demon, to torture and kill? Why must those whom we love be torn with hunger and grief, that a few men may fatten by selling rum?

"I need not, Sir, speak to this body of the danger to the purity of our elective franchise from the rum-traffic — all know it. The traffic is a foul, corroding cancer upon this dear-bought boon — the legacy of revolutionary hardship and death. It was won at a fearful cost. It is an anchor which shall hold in the storm — a bulwark behind which a people can gather and hurl back destruction upon those recreant to freedom and to right. But it is prostituted to the basest purposes, and trampled in the dust. It is wrenched from its honorable and legitimate purpose, and upon a tide of rum and corruption, made to bear bad men into stations of emolument and trust. These facts are written in the history of every election day which has transpired since rum entered the field. There are those who will recognize a mere than 'fancy sketch' in our rapid hints. And is there nothing saddening, nothing alarming, in this wide-spread corruption of demagogism? With rum yoked in unholy alliance, it stalks through the land, and stands in its huge and damning deformity at the pools. It leans over the

Digitized by Google

ballot-box with a leer of triumph. It comes forth from the drunkeries of the land, reeking with all that is foul, and shouts its triumphs in the very citadel of the popular will. Thus libertines, gamblers and drunkards, slime into our town, county, State and national legislatures, and have to do with all the interests of the society in which we live. This tide must be checked and rolled back. This accursing union must be broken into pieces. The lightning of a people's will must fall upon this demagogism, and crush it to earth, or our freedom will be but a name, the elective franchise but a badge of servitude, and the pillars of our free institutions will roll like dust before the storm.

"Yes, as God is our judge, were there no other reason, we should arouse for a conflict with the rum interest for the evil it has done and is doing to the purity, stability, character and permanency of our cherished political institutions. Here is enough to alarm. And yet a large class of the American people slumber without concern over this crater, which is charged with violence and anarchy. Were we to point to the most threatening dangers to the prosperity of these States and the perpetuity of their free institutions, we should single out that class of evils, of Protean phase, which breed in foul luxuriance in the rum-shops of our land.

"But I will not detain this body too long, though I believe this bill to be one of the most important

Digitized by Google

that ever claimed the attention of a deliberative body. The world is watching the course of these States upon this question. Interests as lasting as eternity, are involved. The homes of this great commonwealth this day contain anxious hearts, and prayers are going up that the right may triumph. By our love of virtue and good order, of domestic happiness and peace — home and its circle — our own green land, and God; by every sacred and hallowing tie which binds the good man to his hearth altars, kindred, country and Heaven, let us obey the people and our own consciences, and vote for this bill; and so shall the whole land be filled with joy and thanksgiving, the fire be again kindled on the desolate hearth, and hope, in the sorrowing heart; men shall get drunk no more; peace, happiness and hope shall smile again in the dark habitations; the waste places shall be made glad, and the wilderness blossom as the rose, our stricken wives and mothers weep, and their children at the hearth clap their tiny hands for joy!"

The throng slowly dispersed, but as the sun was setting in the unclouded west, the starry sheet above the Capitol rolled out more proudly than was wont, and upon the wings of lightning the news was flashed to the north, south, east and west, the "MAINE LAW BILL HAS PASSED!"

"Too late!" said our old widow friend of the previous winter, but the old drunkard was there, and sat

Digitized by Google

down upon the steps of the Capitol, and wept like a child. Throughout the State, the mother hugged her child to her bosom with a thrill of gladness, and from the home altars of a Christian people, glad hearts lifted their benisons to the God of the right.

—THE PLAGUE WAS STAYED!"

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

SID LANE AND THE HERMIT.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXXIV.

TWO RESCUES.

"PRAISE be to God for this day. It will live with the birth-day of our country, and be commemorated with bonfires and illuminations, and by the prayers and shouts of a happy people. But oh, if it had come long years ago, what anguish might have been spared. A world of sorrow and crime would never have been written. But thy will, O God, be done."

We recognized our friend, the revivalist, in the gallery of the House, as the Speaker declared the result of the final ballot, bowing his white head reverently as he spoke, and for some minutes hiding his face in his hands. By his side stood a tall, attenuated personage in singular costume, his beard uncut, and his thin hair falling negligently upon his shoulders. His emaciated countenance was pale, but the dark, deep, sunken eye glowed with steady brilliancy. He had watched the debate and the vote with the keenest scrutiny, his lips now and then moving nervously as he half whispered his thoughts. His left arm hung nerveless by his side; and in his right hand he held a long staff.

"Yes, and it will be done. The wicked shall be

Digitized by Google

overtaken, and the wrongs of the innocent avenged. The destroying angel has been commissioned to go forth, and the hosts of hell shall be smitten in all the land. Woe! woe! for the day has come! In the might of the Lord men shall go forth, and the wicked shall be found in their secret hiding places, and the dark beverage of hell be given to the flames, or spilled upon the earth. There's joy in Heaven, peace on the earth, and good will to men, for the day of the Lord has come. The chain shall be struck from the captive and the prison-door be opened. Hallelujah to God, for to-day the monster is chained, and the plague is stayed." So vehemently spoke the companion of the revivalist, as he stood by the side of his more meek-appearing companion, bringing his heavy staff almost fiercely down upon the floor at every sentence.

"Yes, the plague is stayed. God has prospered the right this day. Now to our business, and then for Oakvale. Sure enough, the prison door shall be opened."

The two passed out of the chamber, followed by a crowd who had been attracted by the words and manner of the tallest speaker. They were seeking the Governor's mansion, to the great wonderment of those who had followed them into the street.

The reader will remember, in a previous chapter, the interview between Minnie Hermon and Walter Brayton, which was interrupted by Lane. The latter individual had dogged the footsteps of Minnie to the jail, and under pretence of doing a pressing errand

Digitized by Google

to the prisoner, gained admittance to the hall leading to the cells. He had stolen noiselessly to the door, and had caught the word "oath," as it fell from Minnie's lips.

Two hours from that time, her father put a note into her hand, purporting to be from a sick woman over the river, and urging her immediate attendance. Minnie knew the woman and her situation, and immediately threw on her cloak and started. A fine snow was falling fast, and the night was so dark that she could hardly distinguish the outlines of the mountains against the heavy sky. The woman she was going to see lived in the outskirts of the village, on an unfrequented by-road leading up into the mountain. As she turned from the main road she felt the grasp of a heavy hand upon her shoulder, and strong fingers at her throat. The assault had been so sudden that she had no opportunity of raising an alarm, and in a moment she was gagged and lifted upon a horse behind another person, and borne rapidly away. Her eyes were bandaged, but she knew that her course was up the mountain. She could hear another horse alongside, and therefore judged that there were two persons besides herself in the company. She heard the roaring of the falls, and notwithstanding her situation, she thought of the circumstance which made her acquainted with Brayton, and of all the events which had so rapidly followed that acquaintance There had been more shadow than sunshine across the pathway.

Digitized by Google

After riding a long time, and until she was benumbed with cold, a halt was made. The party had descended the mountain, and were near the "chasm," a gorge of dark and lonely character, at the bottom of which a stream swept fiercely over rocks and falls. The horses were hitched, and Minnie heard the stepping of two persons, as they went back a short distance and commenced conversation in a suppressed tone of voice. Her attention was painfully excited, but she could not distinguish the subject of the conversation.

There seemed to be a difference of opinion between the two individuals in relation to some matter concerning her, and as the dispute waxed warmer, she caught its import; and as she recognized the voice of Jud Lane, a shuddering heart-sickness well-nigh robbed her of her senses. Knowing the man, as she did, the unbroken darkness around, and a wild, bleak mountain seldom trodden, between her and any human habitation, it is no wonder that her head swam and her heart grew sick with fear and despair.

"D——n it, Jud! I wouldn't do it, I tell you. They will miss her at the village, and hunt the whole country."

"How long is it since you became so tender-hearted? You say that dead cats never mew."

"Well, I know," and Minnie recognized the speaker as Burt Vanderwalt, a notorious desperado, "but the truth is, I can't say I like this women business; men, can get along with."

Digitized by Google

"But if your life depended upon one's gossiping tongue — what then?"

"Can't say; but devil hang me — if I want to choke one of 'em to save another man's neck, any how."

"Not if *that* would save you from state prison?" sneeringly asked Lane.

"Ho, ho! Jud Lane, think you can frighten a Vanderwalt, eh? A prison better than a deadfall in public, Jud Lane?"

"Pshaw! Burt, I didn't mean nothing, for you and I are *friends*."

"*Ought* to be, I guess, and without my tipping this confounded woman into the 'chasm.'"

"But what can we do, Burt?"

"You needn't say *we*, 'cause I have been with you in some ugly scrapes, or think that I'll take to killing women 'cause I love rum. If this was *my* job, I should say, take her to Syd's. He'll put her where all h—ll won't find her. Folks sent there never return again, *you know*,"

"That's a fact; but perhaps it's better to do that. I must be back, though, to-morrow; but I'll give you ten dollars to take her there and give Sid the wink."

"Wal, guess I'll do it! Blasted cold night, though. Shouldn't wonder if she'd freeze."

"So much the better, if she does."

"No, not for me. Min. Hermon never did me any harm, Lane, and I cussedly hate to have anything to do with the business — did in the first start."

Digitized by Google

"Well, well, no matter; you can stop at the Old Morgan Clearing and put up. You can build a fire in the cabin and stop awhile."

"Not for ten dollars, though, Jud Lane, on such a night as this."

"How much, then?"

"Why, if the thing is any *object* to you, you can make it twenty, I reckon."

"Make it twenty, then, seein' it's you, and now go ahead. Ride fast, and keep your eye out. Good night."

Lane goaded his horse into a gallop as he turned his head towards Oakvale, and Vanderwalt, leading the horse Minnie was on by the bridle, pushed on through the forest. She was chilled through and through with severe cold, but felt relieved at the absence of Lane.

An hour's brisk riding took them to the Morgan Clearing, a small opening on the mountain side, where a deserted cabin alone invited the chance wanderer or the hunter. Vanderwalt lifted Minnie from her horse in his brawny arms, and then folding his own bear-skin overcoat around her, proceeded to strike and kindle a fire. It was only after a good deal of effort and sundry abrupt expletives, that he succeeded in kindling a blaze. Minnie never saw a more cheerful blaze, though the rude tenement was both empty and cheerless, and the snow had sifted in through many a wide opening. As the first light shone directly upon the darkness, she looked keenly at her companion,

Digitized by Google

anxious to read his countenance, for the thought of her situation in the forest was startling. She had often seen him at her father's tavern; and on one occasion, she had done him an act of great kindness, though she did not suppose that one of his character would remember such acts with gratitude. As the snow was pushed away and the heat of the fire dried the ground, he urged her to sit nearer, and even offered to assist her, as he noticed that she could hardly move her benumbed limbs. For a long time she suffered the most excruciating pains from the effects of the heat, and as it left her fingers and feet, she could hardly keep from closing her eyes; but she dared not do it. Vanderwalt noticed her weariness, and was at a loss how to say something which was evidently on his mind.

"Not much chance for a lady like you to sleep here, I reckon, Miss Hermon," said he, with an embarrassed air, looking towards an old frame of poles, covered with dried hemlock boughs, "and — ahem— I 'spect we oughtn't to stay here till daybreak. Plaguy tough night, though, for a woman to be out. Darned if I don't wish I'd stayed ter hum."

Minnie had made no answer, though there was a tone of respect, of honesty in the man's voice, which gave her hope, and she ventured to ask him why she had thus been decoyed from home, and brought into the mountains in such a night.

"I'm sorry — swow I be, Miss Hermon, but I can't tell that. Jud — that other man, *knows more* than I

Digitized by Google

do 'bout that business," answered Burt, looking for the first time steadily into her face. "But if I'd a known what the job was, I wouldn't a come for him nor no other man — swow I wouldn't, Miss Hermon."

"Take me back, then, to Oakvale, and I will remember the kindness as long as I live. Take me back to-night!"

"No," thoughtfully answered Burt, watching with surprise the sudden action of Minnie, "can't do that; I have — have bargained to take you somewhere else, and it must be done," and the burly ruffian looked towards the doorway with evident fear, and dropped his voice to a whisper.

"But let me take the horse, and I will go forward and *escape* you," she plead with a meaning look.

"That will not do, either," he muttered, as he edged his way nearer the door, as if to prevent her from such a ruse. Minnie started and retreated a step behind the fire.

"Don't never fear me, Miss Hermon, if I have a hard name. You did me a favor once, and I never forget such things. I wouldn't harm a hair of your head, though hadn't it a been for me, I 'spect you wouldn't a been here now. But I darsn't go back. You shan't be harmed, Miss, while Burt Vanderwalt is a friend to you. This is an awful night, and I'll run the risk of staying till daybreak. Too bad, I swow, for any women kind to be out."

Pleading was of no avail, and after exhausting all her powers of persuasion, Minnie gave up the attempt

Digitized by Google

in despair, trusting in God to guard her. Burt stripped the bearskins from the saddles, and with his own coat made the old bed of boughs as comfortable as he could, and insisted that she should lie down close by the fire, and not "worry, for things might all come around right yet." Pulling a bottle from his side pocket, he offered it for her to take a drink from.

Minnie recoiled from the tender with ill-concealed disgust. Seeing that Burt felt hurt at such a reception of his well-meant offer, she explained, that it had cursed her and her's, being the fruitful cause of all her troubles. The people of Oakvale were happy until rum came among them. Even talk upon the temperance question passed away the dismal hours; and Minnie entered into the subject with an enthusiasm that bore her mind away from the circumstances that surrounded her. As she detailed the effects of rum in Oakvale, Burt listened respectfully, then with interest, and as his better nature came once more uppermost, he felt a warmth in his eyes, and fell to kicking the fire to hide his weakness, as he believed it to be. As she ceased speaking, after supposing him an unwilling or angry listener from the violence with which he kicked the fire, the notorious tippler sat for a long time in thought, with his bottle in his hand and its contents untasted.

"True as preachin', every cussed word the gal said," he muttered to himself, as he half-angrily put the cork into the bottle, and replaced it in his pocket. "Every word true — cuss'd if 'taint. If 'twan't for some

Digitized by Google

things — rum again, old Burt!" and he ground his teeth in thought. "If 'twan't for some things, I'd jine the temp'rance concern, and quit drinking. Better done it years ago, Burt. I'll think of that. Any how, the gall shan't be harmed, if I hang for it. Jud Lane may go to the devil."

The revivalist suddenly disappeared from Oakvale. His absence and that of Minnie Hermon, left a blank in the enjoyments of Brayton which caused his mind to relapse into despondency and gloom. With haughty mien and a heart full of bitter feelings, he gave himself up to his fate. He knew not that a single friend was making an effort to fathom the circumstances which rendered his case so hopeless.

On the afternoon of a late winter day, a white-headed man was seen wending his way over one of the bleak mountains of Pennsylvania, his long beard covered with frost, and his footsteps weary from his toilsome day's journey. He was well known in that vicinity, and was cordially welcomed to the homes of most of the honest-hearted yeomanry. For years, without money and without price, he had traveled among them and preached the gospel, his mildness, unassuming benevolence and humble manners, winning the esteem of the more thoughtless. The reader will recognize the revivalist in the aged traveler, and learn that some object of more than usual interest has induced him to make the toilsome winter journey from Oakvale.

Digitized by Google

"Are you acquainted with one Sid Lane, who lives in these parts?" asked the revivalist of his friends where he stopped for the night.

"Yes, believe there is such a man back a few miles over the mountain; but few know anything of the man, nor do they seem to want to. He shuns everybody."

"Does he live in the log house by the ledge?"

"Yes, believe he does."

"Don't know, I suppose, whether he has any connection living?"

"Do not; and it would be as much as a man's head was worth to find out. He's a very bad man. People say he came from York State for no good."

"Did he come from Oakvale?'

"Guess that was the place, or some such name. Pretty hard set there, I guess, if the stories are all true." The revivalist colored and changed the conversation.

"Hasn't there been a report in circulation that a wild man has been seen in a cavern up the ledge, and been heard to scream — a tall man with a long beard?"

"There has; and between you and me, [lowering his voice to a whisper,] I guess it's true; for one of my brothers was along at the time. They had been hunting, and just at night cut across the gorge, you see, to get home before dark. Upon the mountain they heard a scream like, just as though 'twas something human. They thought 'twas a panther, and so

Digitized by Google

concluded they would keep a lookout. And then they heard singing, and a jabbering like some one crazy. They crept among the rocks, and between two big ones said they saw a tall, wild-looking critter behind stout wooden timbers, gnashing his teeth just as if he was mad, and rattling his chains. While they were looking, Sid Lane came, and before they saw him, stood before them with his hand upon his hunting-knife. He raved terribly, and swore that if he ever caught a live man on his premises again, he would be the death of him. I wouldn't go there for any money. Guess the wild man must be some crazy relation of his'n."

"I don't know how that may be, but I have particular reasons for wishing to see this man — must see him. Who is there that can be hired to show me the way up the ledge?"

"Don't know of a man in the settlement who would do it, unless it is my youngest boy, Sam. He is a perfect dare-devil, and is always in some such scrape. I don't know but I might consent for him to go with you just to accommodate, but I am plaguy 'fraid that trouble will come of it."

"I'll take that risk. Sam, as you call him, need not go farther than will be necessary to direct me to the spot where this wild man was seen."

The revivalist found a ready spirit in Sam Janson, and after breakfast the two started over the mountain. It was a long and exciting journey, the mountain being made up of immense jagged rocks, heaped

Digitized by Google

in wildest confusion, a scattering growth of spruce and birch clinging to rift and seam for a rugged support. Here and there deep chasms were gashed in, the loose boulders and stunted timber shutting the sunlight from the gloomy depths. To avoid all chance of meeting Lane, they took a wide detour, which used up the best part of the day before they neared the spot sought. The snow lay over the fissures, and the ascent of the ledge was toilsome and even dangerous. As they neared the head of the gorge in which report had located the wild man, the revivalist insisted that Janson should keep a lookout from the crag, as the height commanded a view of the pass where the outlaw's cabin was located.

Alone, the old man set out on his strange adventure. After disappearing down the rocks among the undergrowth, he pulled a pistol from his pocket and examined it carefully. There was fire in the man's eye and a vigor in his step, which was in striking contrast with one of his character and age, and yet, asleep or awake, at the evening prayer, or preaching on the camp-ground, the weapon had for years been his constant companion. His footsteps had been dogged by a sleepless foe — the very man who claimed the section where he was treading.

The sun had left the gorge in a night-like gloom, and the old man began to despair of effecting the object of his journey, when he noticed a track on the table below him, leading still deeper into the gorge. He hesitated a moment to see that the fresh track had

Digitized by Google

returned, and then with the vigor of youth he sprang lightly down and followed the first. As he reached the bottom of the fearful chasm, he stopped and listened with breathless attention. Being confident that whoever might that day have visited the bottom, they must be beyond hearing, he put his fingers to his mouth and gave a low but prolonged and shrill whistle. Three times he repeated the sound with no response save the echoes which faintly died away down the gorge. Night was upon him, but he could not abandon his purpose, and he again followed the track across the bottom until it struck the other ledge, and wound deftly among the rocks. He whistled again and awaited the result.

High above, as if in the upper air, a wild and spectral ha, ha, burst strangely distinct from some unknown source. The revivalist grasped his staff with excitement, and kept his hand upon his pistol, listening with a heart beating violently with mingled emotions. He heard the same voice again, now swelling out, in a tone at once melodious and shrill, in a familiar hymn often sung in the country meetings.

The revivalist whistled again, though the violence of his feelings almost unmanned him. He hoped, and yet feared. There was something in the voice which thrilled like a well-remembered tone, and should his hopes be realized, the prayer of his heart, with its most cherished purpose, would be accomplished.

"Mock, ye human devils! I hear you, but fear you not. I was sick, and you bound me and cas-

Digitized by Google

me into prison, where you visited me not. But an arm that is mighty to save shall break the bands and let the captive go free."

There was no mistaking that voice; and with great difficulty the listener threaded his way up the ledge, guided somewhat by the voice above, alternating with denunciation and song. When nearly half-way up the ascent from the base, the path led between two huge boulders out upon a shelving rock, hanging perpendicular over the precipice. In the high, abrupt wall immediately back, was a wide seam like an inverted letter *v*, and from this point the sound still proceeded. The revivalist doubted no longer, for the voice was familiar, and he could have shouted for joy. The thread of plotting wickedness was almost in his hand. The clear sky reflected upon the high and exposed situation, revealing in the fissure a rough framework of timbers, let down through a cross-fissure a few feet back, and firmly wedged. And from such a fastness the sound of a human voice proceeded. After resting a moment from the severity of his ascent and the oppression of his thoughts, the revivalist advanced and stood close to the timbers, vainly attempting to penetrate the darkness within. From an immense depth the sounds still came, with a plaintive melody, followed by a burst of rage and defiance. The revivalist again put his hands to his mouth and gave a low whistle. The voice within ceased for a moment, and then there was a rattling of chains, and a wild ha, ha!

Digitized by Google

"Come on! come on, ye human devils. The Lord will smite you with his vengeance. Even in chains I scorn you."

The listener waited a moment, and then in low and deliberate tones, pronounced a name.

"Ha! What's that? Who calls me?"

"A friend."

"Who can that be — my mother? She comes in my dreams; but it's so cold here she cannot stay. But an angel has promised to let me out and give me wings, and then, woe to those who bound me. My swoop shall be terrible."

"How came you here?" continued the revivalist, as he stood sadly listening to the muttering of the insane.

"How came I here? ha! ha! How came human devils on earth? Ask Skillott — ask Jud Lane — ask the devil down the ledge. How came *you* here to deceive, and to cut my throat? Let me out, and I'll slay forty and two thousand of you?"

"I have come to let you out — a friend from *Oakvale*. Come nearer."

There was a rattling of chains, and footsteps carefully approached the timbers.

"Here," reaching his arm in between them, "put your hand in mine," again speaking that familiar name, and mentioning some circumstances of the past, "and know that you have a friend that will save you."

Lightly, like the touch of a cat, long, cold fingers

Digitized by Google

were dropped suspiciously upon the revivalist's palm, the latter all the time speaking in a winning, soothing tone. Silently the captive felt of the hand, and then up the arm; then grasped the palm in both of his, and stooped and kissed it, the revivalist feeling warm drops as the hairy lips touched his palm.

"And don't you know me? Didn't you ever hear my voice before?"

"I have, but it was a long while ago!" The revivalist was overjoyed to witness the soothing effect of his words, and continued to converse with the captive. Looking around warily, he put his mouth to the widest opening, and whispered something in the captive's ear.

"—— hallelujah!"

"Hush! never speak that word to mortal ear," and the startled revivalist again looked behind him uneasily.

"You know me, then!"

"I do. And have you come to let me out? Oh, if I could go back to Oakvale. There's a great work there for me to do. But it may be too late. How long have I been here?"

"I cannot tell; but to-morrow night you shall go free. You must wait and *keep silent.*"

"I'll wait if it's God's will; but it's so cold and dark here. You'll surely come?"

"If I live," and the revivalist slowly withdrew his hand from the reluctant captive's strong grasp, and slowly pursued his way down the ledge. At the base

Digitized by Google

he met a person in the path, whom, in the darkness, he could hardly recognize. Hastily cocking his pistol, he demanded who was there.

"Why, Sam Janson! I didn't know what might happen, and so kind a walked along a little. No harm done, I hope?"

"Oh, no; but let us hurry on."

In spite of the blunt, though cordial remonstrance of young Janson, the revivalist insisted that the former should return to the settlement and procure an axe, saw and iron bar, and return by the next evening, leaving him (the revivalist) on the mountain. The latter was determined not to be foiled in the object of his coming.

He watched eagerly in his concealment for the coming of the night, often regretting that he had not himself gone back to the settlement so as to have made sure of his implements. But just as it began to grow dusk, a low whistle, as agreed upon, indicated the return of Janson. He had failed in procuring an iron bar, and as a substitute, had brought a heavy crane from the fire-place at home. Silently the two pursued their way down into the gorge and across the bottom. Here the revivalist posted young Janson with his rifle, with instructions to give him timely warning of any approach from below, and with his tools commenced the ascent. The silence was broken only by the lonely hooting of an owl across the gorge, and the sighing of the winds as they swept through the stunted mountain pines. Approaching

Digitized by Google

the entrance, he listened for a moment and then asked:

"———, are you here?"

"How could I be anywhere else with these ungodly chains upon me?" soberly though somewhat bitterly replied the captive, immediately advancing and eagerly clasping the hand thrust between the timbers. "And you have come to let me out! It seemed so long since you were here that I feared it was a madman's dream. I have feared I was mad. Do you think I am?"

"It's enough to make any one mad — a place like this. But daylight will not find us here," cheerfully answered the revivalist, laying off his coat and commencing a thorough examination of the timbers. The iron crane was not of sufficient strength to pry them apart so as to admit his body, and he commenced with the saw, often stopping to listen. The sweat rolled down his face, but he worked with unabating vigor, and soon cut out one of the heavy timbers. With the crane in hand, he stepped into the cavern and called the captive's name, being immediately clasped in a strong embrace and loaded with blessings. Upon examination, he found that one of the legs of the captive was in irons, the chain fastened to the ankle by a padlock, and to the heaviest timber of the doorway by a large staple. Inserting the crooked end of the crane into the link in the staple, he twisted it against the latter until it snapped in two. With the head of the axe carefully applied, the padlock

Digitized by Google

was soon broken to pieces, and the fetters unloosed from the leg. In silence the captive — now no longer so — followed his deliverer into the open air, when he paused, looked up to the sky, drew a long breath, and then locked his hands in silent prayer.

"Have you strength to follow me, asked the revivalist.

"Strength enough; havn't starved; the devils did not wish that."

"*Then follow!*"

They had not half made the descent into the bottom of the gorge, when a rifle shot rang out upon the night air, giving warning of an unwelcome approach, immediately followed by Janson's footsteps as he sprang lightly up the steep path. The three immediately stepped behind a rock and awaited farther results. The revivalist was intensely anxious about his companion, fearing that his mind was not sufficiently sound to meet calmly a new danger; but his heart beat lighter as he saw him in the dim light, by his side, and cool as he ever had been in a time of difficulty and danger.

While the revivalist was peering around the path to scan the approach from below, a bullet pierced his hat and scalp, grazing the skull, and prostrating him to the ground.

"There, meddler! I saw your track, and have paid you for your curiosity, I reckon. I knew you, ——— ———, all the time," chuckled Sid Lane, as he approached the now-struggling revivalist.

Digitized by Google

"And I know *you*, Sid Lane! and the Philistines be upon you," howled the Hermit, (for it was he,) springing fiercely upon the former as he stooped to thrust his knife into the prostrate revivalist, with a howl almost unearthly from its bitter fierceness.

Lane had been taken by surprise, he supposing the gun below was fired by the one whom he had shot, and not suspecting that there were others in his company. The struggle was brief. With one desperate exertion of his strength, the Hermit caught up the withered old man, and in spite of his struggles, carried him to the edge of the rocky path and hurled him off, muttering as he listened after the fall below, and then turned to look to the revivalist. That personage was not injured, save a severe wound in the scalp, and had recovered from the stunning effects of the shot. The three immediately commenced their night-journey to the settlement.

Lane was not badly injured by his fall, as there happened to be a table of rocks between him and the precipice; but he wisely chose to shun the odds against him, and trust to other chances to carry out his purposes. He ground his teeth and swore bitterly when he found that his enemy had not been killed by his shot.

—They will meet once more.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXXV.

IN WHICH THE READER WILL SEE SOME ACQUAINTANCES AND THE END OF THE WORK.

THERE was a happy day in Oakvale, for the Maine Law had passed, and drunkenness was to be no more. The day when the law was to go into force, was to be commemorated with bonfires and illuminations; by prayers, songs and shouts; by the ringing of bells and the firing of cannon. At sunrise, the roaring of the latter awoke the people, and ushered in a day of festivity and joy. The cannon had been placed over the river and far up the mountain, and the smoke from its hoarse lungs rolled away like a banner, and rested in the air of the clear spring morning. There was not a cloud in the sky. The sparrows and bluebirds had just returned to sing a welcome to the budding leaf and flower. There was a constant trampling of feet upon the walks, as the masses gathered from the surrounding country, by twos and by scores. They came on foot, on horse-back, and in carriages. Many a family had left the house to take care of itself, so eager were the women and children, especially, to witness the rejoicings. Groups of children in their Sunday suits were tripping here and there, and with few exceptions, all wore smiling countenances. Flags

Digitized by Google

"The Hermit stood erect, his full eye resting upon Skillott."

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

from windows and from ropes stretched across the principal streets, wrought with appropriate devices, were fluttering gaily in the breeze. Many a drunkard, sober from necessity, was observed to watch the streamers and listen to the music of the bands, until he was borne away with the spirit of the day, and smiled upon the scene. Poorly dressed mothers with ragged but clean-looking children, came forth for the first time in years, and watched the proceedings with deep interest. The church in which the meeting was to convene was bedecked with evergreen, tastefully wrought into vines, festoons, and beautiful devices.

The firing of the cannon shook the dark walls of the prison, and startled a band of felons which had just "turned out" for the day's work. In a gang of hands employed upon a roof of one of the new shops, were two convicts, who often cast their eyes towards the smoke curling from the cannon on the mountain side. They had learned enough to divine the cause of the universal commotion, and their eagle spirits chafed as they heard the hum of voices and the strains of music. The large national banner which rolled and swayed from the staff on the Square, seemed to taunt them with its graceful movements in the free air. Who of the throng thought of them in their prison-house?

The two prisoner's were Doctor Howard and Walter Brayton! The sentence of the latter had been commuted to imprisonment for life on the strength of the direct testimony of Halton and his daughter.

Digitized by Google

Towards noon, our old acquaintance, the revivalist, travel-worn and haggard, though smiling, knocked at the warden's door, and inquired for Howard and Brayton.

To his statement that he had taken an interest in those convicts — that he believed them to be no common criminals, the warden sneeringly blurted out an oath, and put all criminals in the same class — cold-hearted and relentless, never seeing the semblance of humanity in the wretch that has committed a crime, and boasting of his cruelty, as though it were an evidence of great capacity for rule. And yet, look at the physiognomy of the man! the small, black, hog eye; the narrow and ill-shaped brow; the lisping tongue, sounding like the serpent's hiss; and the sensual lips, which grin like an idiot's when the man attempts to be a gentleman, or leer like a devil's when his *nature* glares unrestrained upon his repulsive features. He has no more idea of the real duties and responsibilities of his position than the bull-dog in his kennel. Without talents to govern men as a man, his only way to win notoriety is to be a brute and beat men as brutes. We are not mistaken in that face. We have read the souls of more cunning men in our day, and we can decipher the language written on that physiognomy as plainly as though written in English. We know the man's whole strength, his course of habits, thoughts, and the motives which govern his action. If he has not committed a *state-prison crime*, nature has written false.

Digitized by Google

He at first refused to call the two convicts from the shops, but as the revivalist showed him a sealed paper, his countenance changed to sickening smiles, and he hastened to send for the men. They entered the office with a mien unbroken by their degrading position — paler than at the time we saw them last, but erect and dignified, as in their best days. By permission of the now obsequious warden, the revivalist advanced, and without a word of explanation or introduction, handed each a full and complete pardon from the Governor of the State!

Howard bowed his head on the desk, and with a sudden and convulsive movement, crushed the paper in his hand. As suddenly he raised his head again, and advanced to the window, as if to make sure that he had read aright. Brayton stood motionless and silent for a moment, perfectly overwhelmed with the violence of his emotions. Then his lips began to quiver, and he burst into a sob which shook his strong frame as though it had been a child's. Howard first attempted to speak.

"No, no, my friends! Though I am a stranger, you once befriended me in a dark day. I have now had the happiness of doing you both a kindness in return. I wish you, as a favor which you will soon understand, to put yourselves under my direction this day. Let us go."

The convict garb was soon laid off, and with feelings which cannot be written, Howard and Brayton followed their stranger friend through the massive

Digitized by Google

iron gate, nearly sinking with the intensity of their feelings, as it crashed back to its place, and they stood in the sunshine of the wide, free world.

. . . . . .

The church was overflowing. Every place where a foot could find a place was occupied, and out-doors the sea of heads reached as far again. The roar of the cannon and the music of the choir had kept the vast assemblage in good feeling while awaiting the procession of the Orders and the arrival of the speakers. Indeed, almost every person seemed to feel well. Skillott had taken a conspicuous stand upon the platform, the sinister smile more prominent than usual.

From one of the open windows back of the platform, the speakers, and leading temperance men, clergymen, &c., and visitors, came in, and were seated on the platform. With John Gault, Halton, and others of the old veterans, were three persons closely muffled, who remained so during the exercises, attracting much notice from the curious thousands assembled.

We cannot describe the character of that meeting; it were a profanation to attempt it. All hearts were full, and from their fullness the mouths spake, and with a three-times-three that mingled proudly with the pealing of the cannon, the people adjourned to the Square, where glorious things were to be witnessed. Skillott volunteered to announce his devotion to the Maine Law, and Dobbs smiled graciously, but the people swept out and hurried to the Square.

Digitized by Google

In the middle of the Square were a number of barrels of liquor, seized by Marshal Gaston under the new law, and which were to be destroyed that day. Every window in sight of the place was filled with heads, and surrounding the barrels was a dark mass of eager and excited people. Overhead, the flag of our country lifted gracefully on the winds.

With a smile upon his countenance, Gaston seized his sledge which he had brought from his shop, and was about to strike the first head in, when the revivalist caught his hand and arrested the blow; and mounting the doomed barrel, he said, in a clear voice:

"Men and women of Oakvale! I will not long avert a blow which you are so anxious to see fall. As the accursed destroyer has robbed me of all that loved me, I shall claim of our good friend Gaston the privilege of wielding the first blow of this righteous enactment, in Oakvale. Before I do so, however, here, before assembled thousands, let justice be done to those who have been wronged. You recollect Doctor Howard and Walter Brayton — two as noble-hearted men as ever lived among you. (Aye, aye, murmured the crowd; but Skillott frowned.) I have taken this occasion to have their good names vindicated from every stain, and have the proof at hand. The consequences may be unpleasant to some, and grate discordantly upon the general character of the exercises, but I know that you will be glad to

Digitized by Google

see innocent men dealt justly with by their neighbors."

"Yes, yes; that we will," was answered by many voices, amidst intense feeling and a swaying of the crowd as the people attempted to get nearer the speaker.

"Doctor Howard did *not* rob Gerald Brayton's grave, neither did Walter Brayton murder Nye, the drover. And now to the proof. Here are two witnesses whom I would believe, for I have known them for years, and never knew them to lie."

The revivalist then leaped from the barrel and urged the two closely muffled individuals upon the small platform, and with his own hands lifted off their hats and threw their cloaks from their shoulders.

"People of Oakvale! Doctor Howard and Walter Brayton stand before you. Let any man say that he knows aught of crime against them."

The crowd swayed like a deep wave, but still and breathless. Skillott turned deadly pale as he recognized the two men, but quickly recovered his outward coolness.

"Proof!" he sneered. "This is a pretty pass. Convicts breaking prison, and relying upon a Maine Law excitement to keep them from justice." Howard and Brayton both tried to catch the eye of the Judge, but in vain.

"Judge Skillott speaks of breaking prison," said the revivalist, again mounting the liquor-cask. "I

Digitized by Google

will read the plan of their escape," producing and reading the two pardons. "But he asks proof. Let him look at the tall man who has just dropped his cloak from his face."

The Hermit stood erect and calm before the people — his full eye resting upon Skillott.

"Let him again look at the female whom Mr. Brayton has just led before you from the carriage by the flag-staff."

Embarrassed, but still beautiful and erect, Minnie Hermon stood with her head uncovered.

"God has blessed our endeavors to scent out wrong, and here is proof which will be used to clear the innocent and convict the guilty. Friends, Walter Brayton will speak."

Pale from long confinement, Walter stood up, and in a voice which had lost none of its wondrous depth and power, said, in substance:

"Friends! I will not attempt to speak what is this day in my heart. You know me and my history. I have been deeply wronged, as, I thank God, I shall be able to show. By the influence of enemies, I was induced to wrong another. Before God and this assemblage, I will make all the amends it is mine to do, though not worthy of the privilege."

The revivalist then asked if there were any who knew why Walter Brayton and Minnie Hermon should not be united in the holy bands of marriage? There was no response, and he proceeded to pronounce them man and wife, and then put up a prayer which

Digitized by Google

was full of the dark night past and the promising morning of a better future.

"And now, men and women of Oakvale, *James Ricks* strikes the first blow!" at the same time springing to the ground and bringing the sledge down upon the barrel he had stood upon, knocking in the head.

"Depart, ye cursed, to the place prepared for you," fiercely shouted the Hermit, as he seized the weapon and with a powerful sweep crushed through a head at every blow.

"Old Barney Kitts has turned spirit-rapper," said that old toper, now cleanly dressed, although it took three of his feebler strokes to let the spirits out.

The cannon pealed from up the mountain, the bells rang out a merry chime, and the crowd, no longer able to control their enthusiasm, shouted until their voices well-nigh drowned the roar of the cannon; and putting Ricks, Howard, Brayton and Minnie, Gault, Halton, and the Hermit into the wagon, to the music of the band and deafening hurrahs, escorted them through the principal streets. As the sun faded out, fire was set to the liquor, still in pools and in the broken barrels, the flames leaping and writhing like red serpents, as they shot upward towards the sky.

"Too late! too late! Oh, if this had been done years ago, I should not have been robbed of my boy," murmured old Mrs. Weston, and she wept as she sat in her door and watched the flashing flame.

That evening, as Skillott was sitting in his office, buried in deep thought, he was startled by a loud rap

Digitized by Google

on the door. The door was locked; but he sprang from his chair and turned deadly pale. Seizing a bundle of papers which lay on the table, and thrusting them into his pocket, he hastened through the house into the back yard. As he leaped the fence and stood by the river bank, he encountered the one whom, of all others, he most dreaded.

"Leaving these parts, eh? You saw me off once, and I thought I would return the compliment. Are there not more *murderers* to try, Judge? *They are not all hung yet!* — ha, ha!"

The Hermit sat in the boat which Skillott had provided for an escape. The latter drew his pistol; but a strong grasp from behind caught the arm, and the ball struck the water far beyond the boat.

"Not so good a marksman as when you tried me before with ball! Hand a little unsteady, perhaps. Gerald Brayton's was *when he signed the will!*" chuckled the Hermit as he leaped ashore and assisted Sheriff Gaston in placing the prisoner in irons. "Been waiting for you some time. Jud Lane will be glad to see you at the jail. Your friend, Mr. Hermon, has left without so much as bidding us good bye."

The Hermit had dogged Skillott's footsteps, and from his hiding-place watched the arrangements for escape, and listened to the plans of Skillott and Lane. Hermon had not waited for darkness, but during the scene upon the Square had slipped away and made good his escape. From a manuscript we gather some of the incidents which followed:

Digitized by Google

"OAKVALE, Aug. 5, 18—.

DOCTOR HOWARD:—

. . . . . .

"We think and talk of you often, and miss you much, but do not wonder that you do not wish to reside in Oakvale, for the associations are sad indeed. I was at poor Mary's grave to-day, and thought of all the past. I go there often and tend the flowers with a watchful care. I loved her, for she was a kind and true friend to me in the dark days. And she lives not on earth to witness the dawning of a better day!

"You have probably heard ere this, that Skillott committed suicide in the jail on the day before he was to have been executed. Jud Lane was hung, after making a full confession of his crimes.

"I have been sad to-day, and have wept much. Last night a poor looking old beggar called at our door, and in God's name plead for food and rest. Neither Walter nor myself could refuse the appeal, and therefore we took him in. This morning he died, after putting his fleshless arms around my neck and asking my forgiveness. The poor, wandering beggar was the once proud and honorable John Hermon, *my father!* How different would have been his end but for rum! As the Widow Weston says, the law came too late. . . . . So you perceive that there are shadows yet flitting here and there in my sky.

"You will remember the Hermit, and how strangely he disappeared while you were under arrest. He was kidnapped by Skillott and Lane after being shot

Digitized by Google

in the shoulder. But you were made acquainted with all the facts of his disappearance, imprisonment in the Ledge, and release by Ricks. You may not know, however, that he and 'Crazy Alf' are the same, and that he is a son of Elder Snyder, and an uncle of mine! He had traced father to this place, and after his reform, became impressed with the belief that he was an instrument selected to punish his sister's husband — my father — for his cruelty to her. He is with us now, meek, kind, and gentle to all, though a word about rum will arouse him to the fiercest wildness. It would do you good to see him 'smite' the liquor barrels wherever they are found. He spends much of his time by the grave of his mother. He still persists in carrying his long staff, and in wearing his beard.

. . . . . .

"Bless God for the Maine Law! It has filled the land with gladness and joy, and there is rejoicing everywhere. You can hardly conceive the change it has wrought in Oakvale. No drunkenness is seen, and seldom a case of suffering from poverty or want. Pauperism has almost entirely disappeared, and the jail is empty, save now and then a prisoner, who may have been convicted of selling rum. Walter tells me that there is but little business in the courts. I look down where the babe is slumbering in the cradle, and tears of great gladness come freely from a full heart, and I audibly thank God. My boy, if he lives, will not be exposed to the sweep of the dark stream that

Digitized by Google

has wrecked so many of my hopes in other days. Walter has recovered his father's property from Skillott, and with this, added to the avails of his practice, we are surrounded with comfort. We are happy, yet do not forget your own broken home. . . .

"Sid Lane was recently sentenced to the state prison for a long career of body-snatching. It appears strange that the infatuated populace should have so injured you and yours for being suspected of such a crime, while they supported the business of selling rum — strange to license men to destroy the living, and imprison men for robbing the dead! It is certainly worse to rob the heart and the home, than the grave.

"Hon. Mr. Fenton was here yesterday. He was surprised to find that we had but just commenced the married life. He had gotten the impression that Walter was the one who turned his family out of doors to freeze. We were happy to undeceive him.

"Mr. Hudson — you have not forgotten Mortimer Hudson, the elder — is well, and his home is as happy as it can well be. He and Ricks are much together in works of goodness. The latter lingers and weeps like a child by the graves of his family. He was arrested at the instigation of Sid Lane, and tried for an assault with intent to kill the latter, in the rescue of Alfred Snyder; but Alfred testified to the facts, and he was acquitted. I believe I have detailed the principal facts you would be glad to hear, though you will be glad to learn that Deacon McGarr has become a

Digitized by Google

sober and industrious man, and that old Barney Kitts lives like a king.

"Yes, my dear friend, we are happy in the light of this new day. Walter has just come in and lifted Henry —(we have named our babe *Henry Howard*)— from his cradle, and Alfred and Ricks are conversing in low tones in the verandah. The sun has crept up and flooded the sheet, on which I am writing, with golden light, and the heart reflects it from its unclouded depths. A long, dark night has passed away; and with the most profound gratitude to God, we look forward to greet the FULL MORNING OF A BRIGHTER, BETTER DAY!

"Walter says that you may look for us in October, in your western hiding-place.

"Till then, adieu!

"MINNIE BRAYTON."

We will not detain the reader longer, though the subsequent history of our principal characters (and they are now living) might be interesting.

Alfred Snyder was driven from his home by the "iron rule," and became reckless and abandoned for many years. He found, on his return, that his mother had died; and after drinking deeper than before, he suddenly formed the resolution to drink no more. His enthusiastic nature assumed the phase of religious zeal, and he became a firm believer in his Heaven-directed mission against the rum traffic. The same "iron rule" had driven an only daughter from home

Digitized by Google

because she married Hermon, then a worthy young man, but belonging to another denomination. The Elder is a lonely old man, unloved and shunned by all, and cannot obtain hearers even, when speaking against the Maine Law.

Alfred was kidnapped and imprisoned in the fastnesses of one of the counties of Northern Pennsylvania. He owed his life to the fact that Skillott had learned that he had become an heir to a large property, and it was determined to frighten him into a surrender of the claim.

Howard is a man of sorrow; for he does not forget the loss of his accomplished wife. Save now and then a shadow which flits from the past, Minnie and Walter are happy. Their deeds are the best record of their goodness and their standing in the community where they live.

Old Mrs. Weston lives to rejoice over the Maine Law. Its advent could not restore her son to her old heart, but it will save other sons who are loved as she loved hers.

THE END.

Digitized by Google

MAGNIFICENT WORK OF HISTORY.

A Whole Library in Itself!

Cost $11,000—1207 Pages—70 Maps—700 Engravings.

A

HISTORY OF ALL NATIONS,

FROM THE EARLIEST PERIOD TO THE PRESENT TIME;

OR,

UNIVERSAL HISTORY;

IN WHICH THE

HISTORY OF EVERY NATION, ANCIENT AND MODERN,

IS SEPARATELY GIVEN.

BY S. G. GOODRICH,

Consul to Paris, and Author of several Works of History, Parley's Tales, etc.

It contains 1207 pages, royal octavo, and is illustrated by 70 Maps and 700 Engravings: bound in imitation Turkey morocco.

Invariable retail price, $6,00 in one volume; $7,00 in two volumes.
The same, full gilt edge and sides, $8,00 in one volume; $10,00 in two vols.

*** It is believed that the above work, by Mr. Goodrich, will be very acceptable to the American public. It is the result of years of toil and labor, assisted in his researches by several scholars of known ability, and has been gotten up at a great expense by the proprietors. No pains have been spared in the execution of the Illustrations and Maps, which are entirely new, and prepared by the distinguished author *expressly* for the work. Indeed, all the other historical writings of Mr. Goodrich sink into insignificance, when compared with this, the result of his riper and maturer years. It is admitted that *One Hundred Dollars* could not purchase the same matter in any other shape: and the publishers confidently expect that, in consideration of the great literary value of the work, the large sum expended in preparing it for the press, and the exceedingly moderate price at which it is offered, that it will be favorably received by every lover of good books.

Published by MILLER, ORTON & MULLIGAN,
Auburn and Buffalo.

Digitized by Google

GIFT BOOK FOR YOUNG MEN,

Or Familiar Letters on Self-knowledge, Self-education, Female Society, Marriage, &c., by Dr. Wm. A. Alcott, frontispiece, muslin, 312 pp., 12mo. 84
The Same—muslin, gilt edges and full gilt sides, ... 1 50

GIFT BOOK FOR YOUNG LADIES,

Or Woman's Mission; being Familiar Letters to a Young Lady on her Amusements, Employments, Studies, Acquaintances, male and female, Friendships, &c., by Dr. Wm. A. Alcott, frontispiece on steel, muslin, 307 pp., 12mo..... 84
The Same—muslin, gilt edges and full gilt sides, ... 1 50

YOUNG MAN'S BOOK,

Or, Self-Education, by Rev. Wm. Hosmer, frontispiece on steel, muslin, 291 pp., 12mo..... 84
The Same—muslin, gilt edges and full gilt sides,..... 1 50

YOUNG LADY'S BOOK,

Or, Principles of Female Education, by Rev. Wm. Hosmer, frontispiece on steel, muslin, 301 pp., 12mo..... 84
The Same—muslin, gilt edges and full gilt sides, ... 1 50

GOLDEN STEPS FOR THE YOUNG,

To Usefulness, Respectability and Happiness, by John Mathew Austin, author of "Voice to Youth," frontispiece on steel, muslin, 248 pp., 12mo... 84
The Same—muslin, gilt edges and full gilt sides,..... 1 50

VOICE TO THE YOUNG,

Or, Lectures for the Times, by W. W. Patton, muslin, 213 pp., 12mo. ... 75

THE YOUTH'S BOOK OF GEMS,

By F. C. Woodworth, with 100 illustrations, muslin, 336 pp., 8vo. ..... 1 25 .

THE STRING OF PEARLS,

For Boys and Girls, by T. S. Arthur and F. C. Woodworth, with many illustrations, muslin, 288 pp., 16mo..... 84 .

STORIES ABOUT BIRDS,

By F. C. Woodworth, with illustrative engravings, muslin, 336 pp., 16mo. 84 .

STORIES ABOUT ANIMALS,

By F. C. Woodworth, with illustrative engravings, muslin, 336 pp., 16mo. 84 .

WONDERS OF THE INSECT WORLD,

By F. C. Woodworth, with illustrative engravings, muslin, 336 pp., 16mo. 84 .

Digitized by Google

THE NEW CLERK'S ASSISTANT,

Or every man his own Lawyer, a book of Practical Forms, containing numerous precedents for ordinary business transactions, designed for the use of County and Town Officers, Merchants, Mechanics, Farmers, and Professional Men: New Constitution, by J. S. JENKINS, law sheep, 644 pp., 8vo. 2 50

***THE NEW-YORK CIVIL AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE,**

A complete treatise on the Civil and Criminal Jurisdiction, and the Special Powers and Duties of Justices of the Peace in the State of New-York, with numerous Forms and a copious Index, by MORGAN, BLATCHFORD and SEWARD, law sheep 907 pp..... 4 00

***THE GENERAL STATUTES OF NEW-YORK,**

Being the Laws of a General Nature in the Revised Statutes of New-York, with Notes and References to Judicial Decisions, and the Constitution of 1846, by S. BLATCHFORD, Esq., with a copious Index, by Clarence A. Seward, law sheep, 1165 pp., 8vo..... 3 50

THE SAME—in 2 vols., law sheep, ... 4 00

***BLATCHFORD'S REPORT OF CASES,**

Argued and determined in the Circuit Court U. S. for the 2d Circuit, Hon. Samuel Nelson, Presiding Justice; by SAMUEL BLATCHFORD, Esq., Reporter to the Court, law sheep, 706 pp., 8vo., vol. 1,..... 5 50

THE SAME—vol. 2, (in press—ready early in the summer of 1854,)..... 5 50

EXECUTOR'S, ADMINISTRATOR'S AND GUARDIAN'S GUIDE,

Their Powers, Duties, Rights and Obligations, with an Appendix of Practical Forms; also, the Duties of Surrogates, third edition, revised and enlarged, and adapted to the New Constitution; by DAVID WRIGHT, Counsellor at Law, law sheep, 406 pp., 12mo. 1 50

THE NEW CONSTABLE'S GUIDE,

And Marshal's Assistant, their Powers and Duties, Privileges and Liabilities, in Civil and Criminal Proceedings in the State of New-York, with Practical Forms, a new and revised edition, law sh ep, 260 pp., 12mo..... 1 00

NEW ROAD ACT AND HIGHWAY LAWS,

Being a practical Compend of the Powers and Duties of Commissioners and Overseers of Highways in the State of New-York, with References to the Statutes and Legal Decisions, and all the necessary Forms, by a Counsellor at Law, large octavo pamphlet, 40 pp..... 25

***YOUNG'S SCIENCE OF GOVERNMENT,**

New and improved edition, brought down to 1854, and adapted to the use of Schools, by A. W. YOUNG, sheep, 368 pp., 12mo. 1 00

THE AMERICAN ORATOR'S OWN BOOK,

Being Selections from the ablest English and American Authors, muslin, 350 pp., 12mo..... 1 25

Digitized by Google

GREAT MEN AND GREAT EVENTS IN HISTORY,

From the Earliest Period to the Present Time, by JOHN FROST, LL. D., 300 illustrations, muslin, 632 pp, 8vo., ... 2 50
THE SAME—embossed morocco, marble edge, ... 3 00

ANTIQUITIES OF THE STATE OF NEW-YORK,

With an Appendix on the Antiquities of the West, by Hon. E. G. SQUIER, embellished with nearly 100 engravings, small 8vo..... ..... 2 00

THE PHELPS AND GORHAM PURCHASE,

To which is added a Supplement, containing the History of Ontario, Wayne, Livingston, Yates and Allegany Counties, by O. TURNER, author of "The Holland Purchase," 588 pp., 8vo,..... 2 00

HISTORY OF THE WAR WITH MEXICO,

From the commencement of hostilities with the United States, to the ratification of peace—embracing detailed accounts of the brilliant achievements of Generals Taylor, Scott, Worth, Twiggs, Kearney and others, by JOHN S. JENKINS, 20 illustrations, muslin, 506 pp., large 12mo., ... 1 50
THE SAME—octavo edition, embossed morocco, marble edge, 536 pp., ... 2 00

HISTORY OF THE MORMONS,

Or, Latter Day Saints, with a Memoir of Joe Smith, the "American Mahomet," 12 illustrations, muslin, 399 pp., 12mo.,..... 1 25

HISTORY AND CONDITION OF OREGON,

Including a Voyage round the World, by Rev. G. HINES, of the Oregon Mission, muslin, 437 pp., 12mo..... ..... 1 25

FROST'S PICTORIAL HISTORY OF CALIFORNIA,

From the period of the Conquest by Spain, to the formation of a State; containing an account of the Gold Mines, Resources, and Adventures among the Miners, etc.; also Advice to Emigrants: colored frontispiece and other illustrations, muslin, 508 pp., 12mo. 1 50

SIDNEY'S HISTORY OF AUSTRALIA.

The Three Colonies of Australia, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, their Pastures, Copper Mines and Gold Fields, by SAMUEL SIDNEY, 10 illustrations, muslin, 408 pp., 12mo. 1 25

PICTORIAL FAMILY ENCYCLOPEDIA,

Of History, Biography and Travels, comprising prominent Events in the History of the World, Biographies of Eminent Men, and interesting Accounts of Distinguished Travelers, by JOHN FROST, LL. D., 360 illustrations, muslin, 648 pp., 8vo..... ..... 2 00
THE SAME—embossed morocco, marble edges,..... 2 50

Digitized by Google

***TWELVE YEARS A SLAVE,**

The Narrative of SOLOMON NORTHUP, a citizen of New-York, kidnapped in Washington City in 1841, and rescued in 1853, from a Cotton Plantation near the Red River, in Louisiana, 7 illustrations, muslin, 336 pp., 12mo... 1 00

***WILD SCENES OF A HUNTER'S LIFE,**

Including Cummings' Adventures among the Lions, Elephants and other wild Animals of Africa, by JOHN FROST, LL. D., with 8 colored and 300 letter-press illustrations, muslin, 467 pp., 12mo..... 1 50

LIFE ON THE PLAINS,

And among the Diggings, being Scenes and Adventures of an Overland Journey to California, with particular Incidents of the Route, Sufferings of Emigrants, Indian Tribes, &c., by A. DELANO, illustrated, 384 pp., 12mo. 1 25

THE AUSTRALIAN CAPTIVE,

Or, Fifteen Years' Adventures of William Jackman, including his Residence among the Cannibals of Nuyts' Land, with portraits and other illustrations, edited by Rev. I. CHAMBERLAIN, muslin, 392 pp., 12mo..... 1 25

FRONTIER LIFE,

Or Scenes and Adventures in the South-west, by F. HARDMAN, illustrated, muslin, 376 pp., 12mo. 1 25

THRILLING ADVENTURES,

By Land and Sea, being remarkable Facts from Authentic Sources, edited by J. O. BRAYMAN, illustrated, muslin, 504 pp., 12mo..... 1 25

DARING DEEDS OF AMERICAN HEROES,

With Biographical Sketches, by J. O. BRAYMAN, illustrated, 12mo. 450 pp. 1 25

LIFE AT THE SOUTH,

Being Narratives, Scenes, and Incidents in Slave Life, by W. L. G. SMITH, illustrated, muslin, 519 pp., 12mo..... 1 25

BORDER WARS OF THE WEST,

Comprising the Frontier Wars of Pennsylvania, Virginia, Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Tennessee and Wisconsin, and embracing the Individual Adventures among the Indians, and Exploits of Boone, Kenton, Clark, Logan, and other Border Heroes of the West, by PROFESSOR FROST, 300 illustrations, muslin, 606 pp., muslin, 8vo..... 2 50

WESTERN SCENES,

And Reminiscences, together with thrilling Legends and Traditions of the Red Man of the Forest, illustrated, muslin, 8vo..... 2 00

Digitized by Google

YOUATT ON THE HORSE,

Their Structure and Diseases, with their Remedies; also, Practical Rules to Buyers, Breeders, Breakers, Smiths, &c.; Notes by SKINNER. An account of breeds in the United States, by H. S. RANDALL—with 60 illustrations, muslin, 488 pp., 12mo..... 1 50

YOUATT AND MARTIN ON CATTLE,

With their Breeds, Management, and Diseases; a complete guide for the Farmer, the Amateur, and the Veterinary Surgeon; with 100 illustrations, muslin, 460 pp., 12mo. 1 50

***THE AMERICAN FRUIT CULTURIST,**

With directions for the Orchard, Nursery and Garden, and descriptions of American and Foreign Varieties, by J. J. THOMAS; 300 accurate figures, revised and enlarged, muslin, 421 pp., 12mo. 1 25

THE DAIRYMAN'S MANUAL,

A complete Guide for the American Dairyman, by G. EVANS, 235 pp., 8vo. 84

THE AMERICAN FARMER,

Or, Home in the Country, a book for for Rainy Days and Winter Evenings, by J. L. BLAKE, D. D., 28 illustrations, muslin, 460 pp., 12mo..... 1 25

ROGERS' SCIENTIFIC AGRICULTURE,

Muslin or sheep, 12mo. 75

AMERICAN LADY'S SYSTEM OF COOKERY,

Comprising every variety of information for ordinary and holiday occasions, with Rules for Carving, by Mrs. T. J. CROWEN, illustrated, muslin, 454 pp., 12mo..... 1 25

BOEHM'S PRODUCE RECKONER, muslin, 118 pp., 18mo., per dozen, ... 6 00

WHAT I SAW IN NEW-YORK,

Or, a Bird's-eye View of City Life, by J. H. ROSS, M. D., frontispiece, muslin, 326 pp., 12mo. 1 00

FREMONT'S EXPLORING EXPEDITION,

To the Rocky Mountains, Oregon and California, with additional "El Dorado" matter, portrait, muslin, 456 pp., 12mo. 1 25

THE ARCTIC REGIONS,

Being an Account of the Exploring Expeditions of Ross, Franklin, Parry, Back, McClure, and others, with the English and American Expeditions in search of Sir John Franklin, illustrated, muslin, 396 pp., 12mo. 1 25

Digitized by Google

***SHAKSPEARE'S COMPLETE DRAMATIC AND POETICAL WORKS,** *Trade.*

With Memoir, portrait, and 40 illustrations, muslin, 944 pp., 8vo..... 3 50
THE SAME—Glossary, portrait and other illustrations on steel, 1027 pp., sheep,.. 3 75

***BYRON'S COMPLETE POETICAL WORKS,**

With copious Notes and Memoir of his Life, illustrated with elegant steel engravings, sheep, 8vo., ... 3 00

BYRON'S DON JUAN,

Illustrated, 12mo.,..... 1 25

BYRON'S CHILDE HAROLD,

Illustrated, 12mo., ... 1 25

MILTON'S POETICAL WORKS,

Muslin, gilt, 12mo.,..... 1 25

MOORE'S LALLA ROOKH,

Muslin, gilt, 12mo., ... 84

POEMS OF MARTIN FARQUHAR TUPPER,

Author of "Proverbial Philosophy," muslin, 16mo..... 84
THE SAME—gilt edges and full gilt sides,..... 1 50

POEMS OF JOHN QUINCY ADAMS,

On Religion and Society, with notices of his Life and Character, muslin, 116 pp., 12mo..... 50
THE SAME—gilt edges and sides,..... 75

MINNIE HERMON,

Or, the Night and its Morning, a Tale for the Times, by T. W. BROWN, Editor of the Cayuga Chief, 4 illustrations, muslin, 472 pp., 12mo..... 1 25

TEMPERANCE TALES AND HEARTH-STONE REVERIES,

By THURLOW W. BROWN, Editor of the "Cayuga Chief," 5 illustrations and a portrait of the author, on steel, muslin, 384 pp., 12mo., ... 1 25

DICK WILSON,

The Rumseller's Victim, or Humanity Pleading for the Maine Law, a Story founded on fact, by J. K. CORNYN, with an Introduction by T. W. Brown, muslin, 420 pp., 12mo..... 1 25

THE SENATOR'S SON,

Or, the Maine Law the Last Refuge, by METTA V. FULLER, muslin, 291 pp., 12mo. 1 00

Digitized by Google

LIFE OF CHRIST AND HIS APOSTLES, *Trade*

By Rev. J. FLEETWOOD, a new edition, with an Introduction by Professor Seager, 6 illustrations, muslin, 461 pp., 12mo. 1 25
THE SAME—gilt edges and full gilt sides, ... 2 25

JOHN BUNYAN'S PILGRIM'S PROGRESS,

Portrait and illustrations, muslin, 475 pp., 12mo. 1 25
THE SAME—muslin, gilt edges and full gilt sides, ... 2 25

WOMEN OF THE BIBLE,

Being historical and descriptive Sketches of the Women of the Bible, from Eve of the Old, to the Marys of the New Testament, by Rev. P. C. HEADLEY, illustrated, muslin, 284 pp., 16mo. 1 00
THE SAME—muslin, gilt edges and full gilt sides, ... 2 00

POETS AND POETRY OF THE BIBLE,

By GEORGE GILFILLAN, frontispiece, muslin, 325 pp., 12mo. 1 00
THE SAME—muslin, gilt edges and full gilt sides, ... 2 00

INCIDENTS AND NARRATIVES,

For Christian Parents and their Children, by the Rev. A. RUSSELL BELDEN, frontispiece, muslin, 379 pp., 12mo. 1 00

THOUGHTS FOR THE AFFLICTED,

With an Appendix of Selections from various Authors, and an Introduction by Rev. George B. Cheever, D. D., muslin, 225 pp., 12mo. 75

MISSIONARY OFFERING,

A Memorial of Christ's Messengers in Heathen Lands, dedicated to Dr. Judson, illustrated, muslin, 372 pp., 12mo. 1 25

THE HIGHER LAW,

In its relation to Civil Government, with particular reference to Slavery and the Fugitive Slave Law, by Rev. WM. HOSMER, with portrait of Hon. W. H. Seward, muslin, 204 pp., 16mo. 63

*** HARMONY AND EXPOSITION**

Of the Twenty-Fourth Chapter of Matthew, and Parallel Passages in Mark and Luke, etc., etc., by Rev. D. D. BUCK, muslin, 472 pp., 8vo. 1 50

PURE GOLD,

Or, Truth in its Native Loveliness, by Rev. D. HOLMES, muslin, 282 pp. 12mo 1 00

WESLEY OFFERING,

Or, Wesley and his Times, by Rev. D. HOLMES, with frontispiece, (Death of Wesley,) muslin, 306 pp., 12mo. 84

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

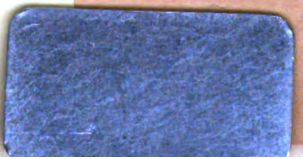
Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

This book should be returned to the Library on or before the last date stamped below.

A fine of five cents a day is incurred by retaining it beyond the specified time.

Please return promptly.



Digitized by Google